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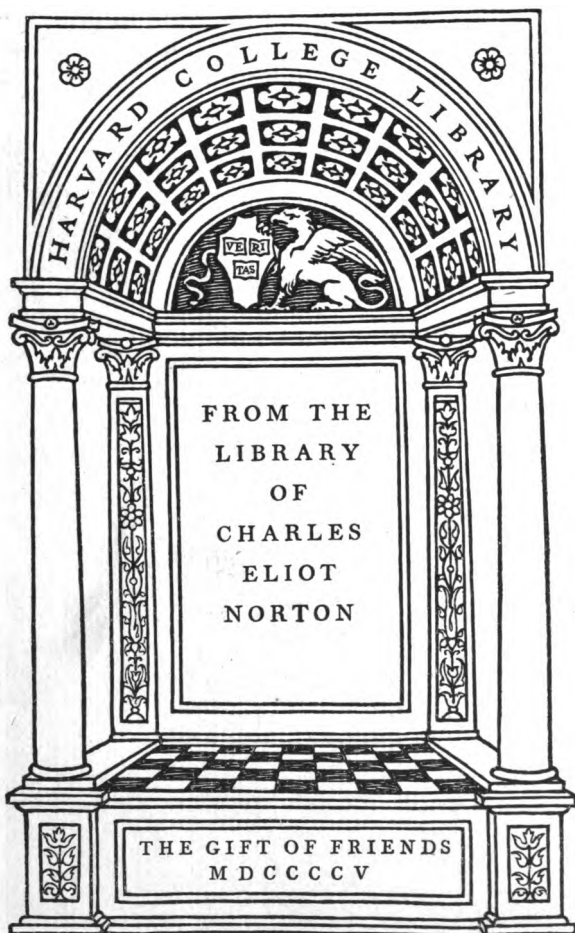
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The inner life of the soul

Susan Lavimia
Emery



To Professor Norton

With the author's thanks
and sincere esteem.

May 20: 1900

65 Concord Avenue, Cambridge.

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THE INNER LIFE OF THE SOUL

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THE INNER LIFE OF THE SOUL

*Short Spiritual Messages for the
Ecclesiastical Year*

BY
S. L. EMERY

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

91 and 93 Fifth Avenue, New York

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*As a bright flame, and like unto the wind,
Come from the heights of heaven, O God the Holy Ghost!
Touch Thou my tongue with fire, guide Thou my feeble pen,
Make my heart strong, then when I need Thee most.
Help me to write of Thee, teach me to speak of Thee,
Let me lead souls to Thee, O God the Holy Ghost!*

PREFACE

THE crying need of our modern day is for a definite and assured faith, conjoined to a clear realization of the personal love of a personal God for each individual soul. This combination forms the very sunshine of life, creating an answering love to God and man, thus making even the loneliest and hardest lot an enviable one, and earth the anteroom of heaven.

The present volume is published with the hope of giving some idea of the vital connection that the ecclesiastical seasons, doctrines, and sacraments of the Catholic Church have with the inner life of the Christian soul. Begun originally in the form of weekly contributions to the *Sacred Heart Review*, the articles gradually assumed shape in the direction here indicated, and are now reprinted by kind permission and with careful advice. They are offered, with humble reverence, to God the Holy Ghost, the Divine Inspirer of our spiritual life; with a special thought of all who are outside the visible fold of the Catholic Church; and with the earnest hope that the reader, in any case, may be drawn more closely by them to the love of God.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.,
FEAST OF ST. ROSE OF LIMA,
August 30, 1903.

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THE INNER LIFE OF THE SOUL

“One thing alone is of any importance, — the adorning our souls with the graces which shall fit them for God’s final reward; and all other things are only worth considering as far as they are subservient to that end.”

IF we meditate on the thirty years that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph spent together, there comes to us, with a sense of holy envy, and like a dream of heavenly loveliness, a glimpse of what the life of that most holy Family was. We find it hinted at by Father Faber when he says, “There is a fuller heart in Mary’s face, as of one who has been living in the awful intimacy of God,” words evidently founded upon that saying of Venerable Mary of Agreda that our Blessed Lord had in His Mother all the intimacy and perfection He had wished for from the whole human race, and of which our sin had disappointed Him.

The Scripture tells us an amazing thing about God, — that His delights are to be with the children of men. Put this thought with that other astonishing one, the intimacy of God, and add to them the third consideration that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are given to us as our perfect examples, and then see what conclusion follows. Is it not that we, with our selfish, indifferent hearts, are not only dear to God, but yearned after as His delights; and that it is possible for us — even us — to enter into intimacy with Him?

What is this intimacy? What value has it? Let us call it by another more customary name.

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It is the hidden, interior, supernatural life of the soul.

In one sense this is common to all. There is a life, and each man in his measure knows it, which we live to God alone. The pagan knows in his blindness, and the sinner in his sin, and the doubter in his doubts, that there is a God Who watches him personally, and Who, one sure day, will punish or reward ; and all have with Almighty God their interior secret dealings, which will be made manifest at last, and prove that He never left any soul without its opportunity of salvation. The Christian knows that at his Baptism a life began within him, of which the graces increase with each prayer uttered, each sacrament received, each good deed done. And saints know that they come at times almost face to face with God, as when Moses talked with Him on Sinai, or Philip Neri felt His presence in the Roman catacombs.

But, besides this, there exists a life, founded upon our Baptism, rising in endeavor and practice far higher than the mere obligatory keeping of the commandments of the Church, having no limit to its possibilities, until it reaches the heights of sanctity in a perfect union with God. This is what, in spiritual phraseology, is called the interior or hidden life which a soul leads when it seeks, with more or less intensity of purpose, for the divine intimacy.

This life is confined to no one class or condition of Christians. It has been practised by the beggar in the streets and the peer of the realm, the married man at his trade and the mother by her fireside, the nun in her cloister, the seamstress at her needle, and the school-girl at her books, the soldier in camp, the king on his throne, the priest at the altar, the Pope ruling the Church. It is possible to all, beautiful and soul-satisfying beyond words to tell. In what does it consist?

We may put it very simply thus : that God is to the soul

more lovely and lovable than any one earthly can possibly be ; that no matter how many are our friends, how dear, how good, one often wants to go away from them, and be alone with Him ; that to please Him is pleasanter than to please all besides ; and that, if His delights are to be with us, we will make our souls as white as possible for His sake, and taste how delicious it is to be with Him.

Thomas à Kempis used to leave his recreation at times, saying that Some One was waiting for him in his cell. So, One more beautiful than any child of man is waiting for us in the tabernacle, with a treasure of holiness and of joy to lavish upon us, if only we on our part wait with Him. And in the cell of our hearts the Spirit of God is waiting, till we quiet earth's noises, and listen to Him alone.

That there are difficulties in the way to the hidden life is certain. It requires penance and self-discipline, and it has its trials and its sorrows, sometimes excruciating and extreme, though its hopes and joys far outweigh its pains. Nevertheless, we are being called with special distinctness to lead this spiritual life. Non-Catholics are printing and reading our spiritual books. The lives of our saints, and the writings of our ascetic and mystical theologians, are to be found in public libraries, whence any one can take them. Consequently, men not of our faith look closely to see if we practise what we profess. Let them live what life they will themselves, let them talk what scandal they will against the Church, they nevertheless expect a holiness, unlike their own, and like our books, from the Church's sons and daughters.

Shall we not decide to study this life, and enter upon its road? Let us take for our encouragement these words written by Father Faber, who has given us most fascinating glimpses into the possible beauty of the inner life of the soul : —

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“Think of a little child trying to get at the handle of a door to open it, when it is too small to reach it. Any one would of course help it, by opening the door for the little thing. No more can God help opening the door for us, when we pray for high graces. God is more touched at our trying to reach that handle than words can say.”

HE WHO COMETH

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

THOUGH the gospel for Advent Sunday corresponds, to a noticeable extent, with that for the final Sunday after Pentecost, there is between them a marked difference. Throughout the one there sounds an almost unbroken note of awe and dread. But to-day, though we hear again of the distress of nations, and of men withering away for fear, and for expectation of what shall come upon the whole world, in the midst of these terrors are read the cheering words : —

“When these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads ; because your redemption is at hand.”

Throughout the office for the day rings a singular note of joy and trust. “Exert,” the collect cries, “exert, O Lord ! Thy power, and come.” “None of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded,” says the introit ; and the gradual and offertory repeat the cry. Those who live during Advent in the Church’s spirit find it to be, indeed, a peaceful season of waiting for the coming of the Lord.

It is a calm Lent of recollection before the joy of Christmas ; the feast of Mary’s Expectation sets the keynote to it, bringing us into union with her immaculate heart, as she waited for the day when she would look first upon the face

of her Child Who was her God. Let us draw near, and kneel beside her on this Advent Sunday, and learn from her what Advent really is.

The word means *coming*; the season of Advent is that in which we are called to think upon the first coming of Christ to be our Saviour, and His second coming to be our Judge. When Mary prayed and waited in those unequalled Advent days before the first Christmas dawned, what did she think and feel?

Perhaps she was scarcely conscious that she thought or felt at all. In complete union with the God she bore within her, His will was hers; she lived on His life far more than that unborn Saviour lived on hers. The Child, Whose face she yearned to see, will come, at the last great day, and we shall see His face. Why should not our Advent be like hers?

We know the answer. Between us and Mary's peaceful joy stands the dark spectre, sin.

Cardinal Newman has this very subtle thought among a thousand others. "Every sin," he says, "has its history; it is not an accident; it is the fruit of former sins in thought or deed; it is the token of a habit deeply rooted and far extending. . . . They are all connected; they tend to a whole; they look towards an end; and they hasten to their fulfilment."

We know well that no such history belonged to the sinless Mother; but for us the dread which hangs so darkly about the Advent season is justly there. Who has not a history of sin in his past career, some habit deeply rooted and far extending; and all these things look indeed towards an end, and hasten to their fulfilment—their final unveiling and doom at the final day! Yet, for all her children, the Church exclaims this Sunday: "Exert, O Lord! Thy power, and come," and still she speaks her dauntless

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word of trust: "None of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded."

Think again on the bliss of Mary, Mother of God, during the last of those Jewish Advents, when for thousands of years prophets and people had cried in vain for their God to come, — in the first of those Christian Advents, when truly He had come, though men knew it not. Can she sleep at night or speak by day, in the rapture of that unbroken union, her spotless holiness linked with the Divinity in a manner unknown before and never to be known again? Does she not seem to herself to move ever among "pure lilies of eternal peace, whose odors haunt her dreams"? Do not angels kneel ever in her presence, plainly visible to her who has received the gift of the Divine Maternity? Do not her ears hear heaven's hosannas ring about her, as around the Holy of Holies, the most sacred tabernacle of the most mighty Lord? Can you or I in the slightest degree imagine the rapture that filled to the brim the chosen Mother's soul?

Can we?

One day of this holy season, you and I, please God, will kneel in the confessional and before the altar, and our souls will be fed with those "most nourishing sacraments" left by Jesus Christ in His one true Church for the use of sinful man. One day of this holy season, the true Christ, God and Man, will be within us, as really as His mother bore Him hiddenly within her all these Advent days. My God! the bliss of Mary in some degree awaits each child of Thine.

Let us but seek Him gravely, patiently, taking dryness and desolation as our penance; let us but "wait for Him," till the day break, and the shadows flee away, no matter how hard the trial be, brought by our sins upon us; still let us cry through all, unconquered: "Exert, O Lord! Thy

power, and come." In the end, we "shall not be confounded." In God's own good time, and in the Holy Spirit's power, something unknown before will come upon us — something we never shall forget ; a strength, a reverence, a peace will fill our souls, and uplift them into a new union with God, for which we shall never be able to thank Him enough.

And then, looking on to the final Advent, while still we shudder at its terrors, we shall be in perfect peace. We shall know *Who it is that cometh*, even Jesus Whom we have fed upon, and held in our hearts, and loved and welcomed with Mary ; and kneeling then before our God, Who was on earth our Lover and Best Beloved, we shall say to Him what He will understand : "*Recordare, Jesu pie ! — Ah, remember, Jesu sweet !*"

THE WRITTEN WORD

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

IN the epistle for the second Sunday in Advent, we find these words : " Whatever things were written, were written for our instruction ; that, through patience and the consolation of the Scriptures, we may have hope. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ ; that unanimously with one mouth ye may honor God."

These words lead us to consider a further Advent of our Blessed Lord, in addition to those of which we spoke last ; and that is, His advent or coming to us in the pages of Holy Writ. So full are they of Him, that learned and saintly souls have looked upon the Scriptures as another tabernacle. As an example, let us consider the celebrated

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founder of the Sulpicians, Jean Jacques Olier. His eminent French biographer, Monsieur Faillon, tells us that his great desire was that his followers and true disciples should live the life of Our Lord ; and he recommended to them, as one great means for the attainment of this end, the assiduous study of the actions of this Divine Master as recorded in the Gospels, and the interior sentiments that animated Him in the performance of these acts. He, himself, was accustomed to read the sacred books, kneeling and with uncovered head. His Bible was kept on a little throne in his room ; and, in his profound reverence and faith, he used, as he entered or left the room, to adore the Holy Spirit of God residing in the holy volume. The book, a veritable relic, preserved in the seminary of St. Sulpice, was ornamented with extraordinary magnificence. On one cover, in the centre, was an image of the Sacred Host, the true Word of God under the Eucharistic veil, surrounded by six winged cherub heads ; on the other cover was the picture of a book, the written Word of God, surrounded by tongues of flame. In each corner of each cover was a cherub head.

The wise and devout priest taught in eloquent language that the true Word of God, or that which God says *in Himself*, is incomprehensible, God saying always all that which He is, and all that He knows ; and this is immense and infinite. But, in the Scriptures, he continued, we read only a little syllable of what that immense voice pronounces in itself, we see only very imperfectly the thoughts of God. And while we wait the time when we shall understand the infinite Word, the explanation of the eternal secret of God, we must keep our minds reverently attentive to the revealed Word, and to that portion of the divine wisdom which He makes manifest in His Scriptures, having them before us as the oracle whereby God speaks to us, as the ark and the tabernacle where He wishes to be adored and consulted.

We are also told, in Monsieur Olier's life, that he was most humbly and practically devoted to the hierarchy of the Church, and especially to the visible head of the Church on earth, the Holy Father at Rome. By this means he was preserved from the mistakes of many men of his time and ours, who read the Scriptures each in his own fashion, misinterpreting them, and perplexing themselves and others; while he always tried to follow with sincere faithfulness the precept of to-day's epistle, "that unanimously with one mouth ye may honor God."

Holy Scripture would be a far other thing than it is to the world to-day, if all nominal Christians regarded it as this great servant of God was accustomed to do. It is with humility, with reverence, with self-abnegation, that we must approach that wonderful book, never dreaming that we, poor, ignorant, finite creatures that we are, can expect to fathom its unfathomable depths. It is true that we shall find there much to charm the taste, feed the intellect, enchant the keen reasoning sense implanted in us by the hand of God. What else could come from the study of what St. Catherine of Siena calls the "sweet first truth"? All true joys must necessarily be the portion of those who constantly contemplate the Divine Fulness and the Source of perfect and unfailing joy.

But we must let ourselves be led by the infallible voice of that infallible authority which is vested with the panoply of the unerring Spirit of God. Bishop Gay wisely teaches: "As regards the science of the saints, the science of religion, the science of God, esteem it most highly, love it passionately, and study it as much as your capacity and your state will allow. You cannot know the Holy Gospel too well. You can never be learned enough in that science which was all the glory and all the doctrine of St. Paul, the science of Jesus and of Jesus crucified. But — the more

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humble of mind you are, the more rapid and the greater will be your progress in the science of God." The Bishop was speaking to Carmelites ; but he distinctly says that, in these instructions to them, "it has appeared to us many times that we were speaking to the whole world."

On December eighth we celebrate that beautiful feast of obligation, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. She who is our pattern in her holy life, her intense humility, her ardent love, is our pattern, too, in the study of the Bible. Giving herself from her earliest years to God's service in the temple, her mind was saturated with the Hebrew Scriptures ; the psalms of David were her constant songs ; the mysterious sayings of the prophets formed the yearning of her soul. With desire she desired the Coming, the Advent, of the promised Messiah, Whose future advent at the last great day too many now desire to put far off, into an eternity of delay. Let us follow, rather, the spotless Virgin's example, and try, as she did, to find everywhere the traces of the Eternal Word of God in His written and revealed Word, the Holy Scriptures, as interpreted by our Holy Mother the Church. Then we shall learn to cry ardently : "Come, Lord Jesus ! tarry not. How long, O God, how long?"

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

THE EIGHTH OF DECEMBER

THE feast of the Immaculate Conception, — the feast of our Mother's peculiar grace, the grace she would willingly have forfeited her title of Mother of God rather than lose, — who of the sin-stained race of man can speak worthily of it?

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION 11

Gather earth's purest and loveliest things together, the lily of the valley and the whitest of roses, the snowflakes still falling untouched by soil of earth, the untarnished clouds of heaven, the pearl from the sea-depths and the diamond clear as the dew, the babe with the waters of baptism still upon its brow, and the dying saint with the cleansing oils not dry upon him, the angels from the never-sinning choirs, and Michael from his high place where he looks up, unmarred by slightest fault or imperfection, reverently but steadily, upon the face of God : what are they but glad types and images of her who is fairest, purest, immaculate, sovereign lady of the angels, empress of the universe, daughter of the Father, mother of the Son, spouse of the Holy Ghost, queen of the boundless realm where God is king !

Poor blinded people who do not understand us when we use such words as these ! What reply can we give them other than this : "She is our Mother, and the Mother of our Lord. We try to love and honor her as He does." What can we do but pray that they may in time draw near to her, and speak to her, and grow white from living near her whiteness, and pure by thinking of her purity ?

The Jews, it is said, had a tradition that when God created the world, He asked the angels what they thought of this His work, and one of them made answer that it was so vast and so perfect that only one thing was wanting to it, and this was that a voice should be created, clear, mighty, and harmonious, which should fill all the quarters of the world incessantly with its sweet sound, thus day and night to thank the Almighty Creator for His blessings. I think the voice of Mary goes far to meet this need.

She has been beautifully called the Christian's Benedicite, because she is all praise, all thanksgiving ; and "as in old times the servants of God made their Benedicite of seas and mountains, birds and fishes, heat and cold, wells and green

things, cattle and men, bidding them all to praise, exalt, and super-exalt the glory of the good Creator, so now the Church teaches us to thank in strains of ardent love the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity for the gifts and graces of Mary, and has indulgenced special devotions to this effect."

Consider thoughtfully with what love and tenderness Almighty God must regard any soul that is wholly devoted to His honor and service, and that strives constantly to please Him and to do His will alone. Then think of that profound saying of St. John of the Cross: —

"When the memory is transformed in God, the operations of the memory and of the other powers are, as it were, Divine. God has entered into possession, by this transformation, as their absolute Lord; guides and governs them Himself divinely by His own Spirit and will, as it is written: 'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' . . . So it was with the glorious Mother of God. Perfect from the first, there was no impression of created things on her soul, to turn her aside from God, or in any way to influence her; for her every movement ever proceeded from the Holy Ghost."

Let us read the words again and again till they sink into the very depths of our hearts. Let us lift our eyes and look upon her, our Immaculate Mother, given to us from the cross, "who never can forget what it cost her to become our mother."

And while the rest and peace that come with the thought of her, more and more quietly and intensely fill our souls grown tranquil in her presence, "as one whom his mother comforteth," — let us beg of her to obtain of God for us that inestimable gift, a perfect oneness of our will with His will, till at last our every movement also shall proceed like hers from the Holy Ghost, and our hearts shall become, in their love and purity and meekness, humble copies of her

spotless heart, which from the first was the very temple of Deity, the immaculate palace of the God of holiness, the true Holy of Holies on earth.

I AM THE VOICE

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

AMONG the figures that gather around the holy childhood of our Divine Saviour is one that attracts our peculiar love and reverence ; it is that of him whose birthday came a few months earlier than the birthday of Him Who is the Eternal. We know him as St. John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, the immediate precursor of the Messiah, the cousin of our Lord. Christ said of him that there had not been a greater born of woman ; few came so near to sharing Mary's prerogative of the Immaculate Conception ; he is a marvel to-day in heaven ; yet, when men asked of him, " Who art thou ? " his singular reply was this : "*I am the voice*, — the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord !"

Only the voice ! a thing that has no shape, nothing the hand can touch or the eyes can see. Only a voice ! dying away upon the air, leaving no trace. Greatest of men — and only a voice !

The profound humility of the words awes us, as we think upon them. What was the life of this most holy, most humble servant of Jesus ? Dwelt he ever close beside Him ? Was his the bliss of being nearest and dearest to Jesus always, from crib to cross, from Nazareth to Calvary, from Mary's knee to the throne of God ? We know it was not so. But did they — the Child Jesus and the child John — play together innocent games, which the angels watched

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with a heavenly delight? Did they pull flowers for Mary, Mother most blessed? In their marvellous infancy, which took the first step, which spoke the first word, and what were the words they said?

We know not. This only we know — this amazing thing, that the playmate, the cousin, the friend of Jesus, in order to do the will of Jesus, left His visible presence, and went away from Him into the wilderness, to sojourn there alone.

St. Francis de Sales has called this a most striking example of detachment. Is it the only one the Christmas season contains? On the eighteenth of December occurs the feast of our Lady's Expectation. Did she not spend it herself on the rough road to Bethlehem? Was not that painful journey the journeying of the poor, with all its trying attendant circumstances? And was it no trial of her submission, no disturbance of her tranquillity, that the birth of her Son should take place in Bethlehem rather than in the peaceful and hallowed home of the Annunciation, where Gabriel told her first of her high destiny, and God the Holy Ghost came upon her, filling her with such rapture as the highest seraphim never knew?

Look at to-day's epistle. "Rejoice in the Lord always," St. Paul exclaims; "again, I say, rejoice. . . . The Lord is nigh. . . . The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

St. John the Baptist had caught the very essence of his Master's spirit: "Behold, I come, *to do Thy will, O God.*" And something more than the visible presence of Jesus, something lovelier than that beautiful face of His, something sweeter than those tones of sweetest music, drew him away into the desert, as, later, it drew the Mother on to Bethlehem and away from Nazareth, and as afterwards it drew her to stand beside the cross. The will of God — the will of God — this was the keynote of their lives. Their meat

and drink was to do that will, as He was to say later, in His infinite condescension, that it was His.

Is it ours ?

Let us ask ourselves this question earnestly, during the Advent season. It is a chief means of preparation for Christmas joys. How many things seem fearfully bitter, and hard to do or bear, until we sweeten and soften them with this adorable will. And then — what matters it where He calls us or what He bids us do? In union with Him, our God becomes indeed our all, and we become to ourselves only a voice ; yes, less than a voice ; and the peace of God settles upon the happy soul. That soul shares the joy of the Virgin Mother ; for, as the apostle writes, it forms Jesus Christ in the heart to the praise and glory of God. Almighty God, looking down from heaven, sees His children by adoption become the living images of His divine and only begotten Son, and His great heart is glad. May He grant us this Christmas gift, to do His will alone !

“ O Jesus merciful ! draw near
In Thy compassions deep,
As on our weary way we go,
And watch beside us keep.

“ There is a deeper, holier peace
Than the lulling of our pain ;
And a sweeter calm than that which sleep
Sheds over heart and brain.

“ It is the soul’s surrendered choice,
The settling of the will,
Lying down calmly on the cross,
God’s purpose to fulfil.

“ For this I need Thy presence, Lord !
My hand held fast in Thine.
Infuse Thou through my spirit faint
An energy divine.

"Feed me with love; imprint on me
Thine awful kiss of peace;
Let me be still upon Thy breast,
Nor struggle for release.

"And sanctify my weakness, Lord!
Nature's extreme distress
Is just the time when it can learn
God's glory to express.

"Stamp in, O God! at any cost
The likeness of Thy Son.
Filial submission to Thy will
Is heaven itself begun."

LOVE

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

IT is the fourth Sunday in Advent, a day for profound peace and for sweetest expectation, when we shall do well to draw very near to Mary and Joseph, and learn from them how Christmas should be kept. This night will teach us that Love shall be lord of all.

Unto what does the Infant Jesus come? To riches, luxury, a throne, a palace? He comes to poverty, contempt, neglect, to wintry cold and a manger-bed. But He comes to the arms of a Mother whose holiness is immaculate, and whose love is more ardent than the seraphim's; and Jesus is content.

Few things, perhaps, betray so thoroughly Protestants' lack of the real spirit of meditative prayer and contemplation as their continued misunderstanding of a true Catholic's veneration for the Blessed Virgin. Sister Mary of Agreda says, as we have already quoted, that our Blessed Lord had in His Mother all the intimacy and perfection He had

wished for from the whole human race, and of which our sin had disappointed Him. If a Protestant be inclined to call this statement excessive, can he deny that Mary at all events enjoyed for thirty-three years a special union and intimacy with God, of a most marked and peculiar nature?

Let us enter the stable with the Wise Men or the shepherds, — would to God that it might be with the self-forgetful faith of the Wise Men, or the shepherds' meek humility! — and let us kneel humbly at Mary's knee. Who worships Jesus with them must needs kneel there. Look reverently now, as Mary does, on Him the Infant God. We indeed with her, as Father Faber says, we with her, privileged by faith as she by sight, may watch His pulses rise and fall, feel His warm breath against our faces, kiss His living lips; and yet, "it is the wonderful, the terrible, the all-knowing, the unbeginning God, Who lies so little and so calm on Mary's knee."

Abide there long in reverent silence. What is the lesson taught us? Do Catholics say anything of Mary that is beyond her tremendous dignity? Is it not, rather, that non-Catholics do not comprehend the real nature and dignity of the Son of Mary? By that, we gauge her greatness which God Himself constituted and planned. In Bethlehem's stable she gave Him what He wanted most, — the heart's true love. For what do we see in the Christ Child's face? What do His throbbing pulses say? What is the meaning of those strong and audible heart-beats, strange to hear in a little babe?

It means that His heart comes nigh to breaking with love for God and man. Nay, more, far more; it means that His heart is the special dwelling-place of God the Holy Ghost, of that Divine Person, Who in the Blessed Trinity is Love itself, as the Father is Power, and the Son is Wisdom, and yet, supremely and forever, these Three are One. It means

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that with no less a love than God the Holy Ghost, that Blessed Babe, with His great name, Jesus, yet unnamed by man, loves you and me. Weak, ignorant, sin-defiled, fain to hide our faces in shame before the calm gaze of the Undeiled and Holy, the truth remains, *He loves us*. Do we find in Scripture more amazing words than these, knowing ourselves to be what we are, and God to be what He is — that He “so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son”? This was the Eternal Father’s Christmas gift to man. Do we comprehend now with trembling rapture our Lord’s words to St. Catherine of Genoa: “If you knew how I love a soul! But this will be the last thing that you will know in this world; for to comprehend it would kill you.”

What Christmas gift does He ask of us? An answering love. To this intent, in the day’s epistle for the Mass at daybreak, are the words: “He saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost; Whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” *He Who is Love will teach us how to love.*

Ask of God that great blessing, a special and true devotion to His Holy Spirit. Our example is the Mother of Jesus, the spouse of the Holy Ghost. It is the duty and high privilege of every one of us, “to form Jesus Christ in our hearts to the praise and glory of God,” — so Holy Scripture teaches. Each one of us in his degree is summoned to this high calling. “Whosoever shall do the will of My Father, Who is in heaven,” our Master said, “he is my brother, and sister, and mother.” The Holy Ghost, by Whose overshadowing power God was made man in Mary’s womb, effects this mystical work of grace in the souls of men.

THE DIVINE DARKNESS OF CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS EVE

AS Christmas approaches, if we could look into the hearts of Catholics, what various thoughts would we find! Perhaps, in most, the memory of the final Advent, so urgently pressed upon us in this season at first, would be now almost eclipsed by the thought of that other Advent when the Child Jesus came, and of the festival so near at hand, which commemorates His happy coming. There will be plans for household gatherings, for games and gifts; plans for Church decorations and fine music; novenas will be made, and consciences cleansed for the Christmas communion; in some homes there will be sad faces and heavy hearts, thinking of one a year since joining in the planning, and now numbered with the dead.

But everywhere the cry will be "Happy Christmas!" It is the feast of happiness, we say. Let us go in meditation quietly to the first Christmas, and see where its great joy was found.

It is Christmas Eve, a Thursday, the twenty-fourth of December, and day is done. Through the streets of a little village, in the land of Judea, St. Joseph and the Mother of God have wandered, homeless and houseless, seeking in vain for shelter. There are no gifts for them, no friends, no food, no warmth, no welcome. Such were the joys and glories of the first Christmas Eve. At last, in a stable, with ox and ass for comrades, they made their home.

On the hills about that village the white flocks lay sleeping, under the Advent moon we watch to-night, the moon that shall fall when the Lord Christ comes again. When it was midnight, the blue skies opened, and the simple shep-

herds saw angels coming, and heard unearthly music, such as all earth's choirs cannot match on Christmas Day.

We can never tell or even dream the glory of that first Christmas night and its angelic sights and sounds. In spirit we may follow the shepherds to the manger, look on Mary's more than angel face, and gaze on Him before Whose beauty stars fade and suns grow dim ; we may kiss in spirit those tiny feet, and beg St. Joseph to bless us with that Babe's tiny hand. It is well for us if we do this, for we have caught one of the true joys of Christmas, before which poverty and grief grow dumb. But do you think we have found yet the rapture of the first Christmas night?

Let the heavenly brilliance die, and the *Gloria* cease, and the angels pass away. Send back the shepherds to the hill-tops, to wonder and then to sleep. Let the beasts in the lowly stable close their blessed eyes, that have seen such sights to-night as creatures never saw before. Let the moon sink beneath the hills, and darkness cover the earth, and silence brood like the Spirit-dove above it. Then let us think of the happiest and holiest of mothers, alone with her God, Who is her Child.

Let us kneel also in that darkness, away from friend and companion, earth's joys and lights put from us, and let us entreat Mary, our Mother, to share with us the rapture of the divine poverty, the divine loneliness, the divine darkness of that Christmas night. Do you think she would have exchanged one moment of it for all earth's warmth and household joys and costly gifts to-day?

In that cold and darkness He lies before her, Whose Heart holds a fire which shall one day flash into the seven-fold flame of the Holy Ghost. She sees the face that the prophets yearned for ; the eyes look into her eyes, the lips smile back her smiles. She kneels to this her God, and she adores Him, with a humility far beyond that of the hum-

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blest saint. And lo ! the Child's arms are held out to His Mother. It is lip to lip now, eye to eye, and heart to heart ; for the Lord hath come to His own !

Even St. Gertrude's impassioned words fail to express adequately the Virgin-Mother's joys : —

“Lift up thine eyes, O my soul ! behold and see the power of thy King, the grace of thy God, the love of thy Saviour, now that thou art so near to Him. Take now thy rest. See how immense the glory is for which thou hast despised the world. See how complete the good is for which thou hast chosen to wait.

“O Love, whose kiss divine has such sweetness, Thou art that fountain after which my thirsting soul doth pant. Thine are all the transports of my heart.

“How ineffable is this union ! How infinitely far this close familiarity with Thee is above all other manner of life ! How enrapturing is Thy fragrance ! What fulness of bliss to breathe the peace divine, the largeness of mercy there is in Thee ! Thou art the rich and overflowing treasure of manifold consolation. O Love ! bring me into Thy mystic storerooms, and give me to drink of the wine Thou keepest therein. For all the vessels which contain it are filled with God, and the Holy Spirit filleth them even to the brim.”

Ah, the glory and the beauty of the divine Christmas darkness ! May the day come soon and surely, when the poor, and the sad and the lonely, the rich and the happy, gathering about His altars where evermore in the crib of the tabernacle the Christ is waiting, and evermore the Star of Bethlehem burns, unfailing, in the altar-lamp, shall see, from the nest of that wounded Heart where the Dove lies hidden, and from those chalices filled with the Holy Spirit even to the brim, His fires blaze forth to warm and heal them, till we shall crave earthly gifts no longer, in the rapturous soul-satisfying fulness of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE happiest day of all the year has dawned, the day that we instinctively call Happy Christmas. "It would be unlawful to be sad to-day," exclaimed Pope Leo the Great in his Christmas sermon, "for to-day is Life's birthday; the birthday of that Life Which, for us dying creatures, taketh away the sting of death, and bringeth the bright promise of the eternal gladness hereafter. . . . Rejoice, O thou that art holy; thou drawest nearer to thy crown. Rejoice, O thou that art sinful; the Saviour offereth thee pardon. Rejoice, O thou Gentile; God calleth thee to life."

This cry of the great Pope is echoed in the lovely roadside songs of his own Italy, with a most touching simplicity and sweetness, in the following stanzas:—

"Behold, my heart, the Babe divine!
This night He left the skies,
And born on earth for sins of thine,
In that rough manger lies.
Canst thou behold, and yet be cold?
Or look with careless eyes?"

"He came in winter's frost and cold,
That thou shouldst warmèd be;
That heavenly light should thee enfold,
In midnight shades came He.
Come, meet Him here, with love sincere,
For much hath He loved thee."

Christmas Day seems, distinctively, to be the feast of simple, childlike joy and love. How could it be otherwise, when it is the feast of angels and of shepherds; of a simple carpenter and an immaculate maiden-mother; of the little

white lambs of Bethlehem, and of the undefiled and innocent Lamb of God? How could it be otherwise, when the very gates of heaven above are flung open, and the star-strewn skies become a pathway for seraphim and cherubim, and the angels' feet are beautiful on the Judean mountains? What a glad, glad song rings from angel lips, clearly audible to the ears of those favored men who were tending their blessed sheep on the first Christmas night: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."

Must not the echo of that angelic canticle have rung in those shepherds' ears all their lives through, filling them with peculiar joy? It has rung through the Church of the Infant Jesus ever since, in how many lands and climes!

In New England, people naturally think of Christmas as that time when

"The snow lay on the ground,
The stars shone bright";

but there are lands where Christmas Day is a summer day. Always and everywhere, however, it is, for Christian hearts, a day of joy. Across the continent, in California, it may be mild like spring; and one asks with the poet:—

"Can this be Christmas, — sweet as May,
With drowsy sun and dreamy air,
And new grass pointing out the way
For flowers to follow everywhere?

"With glossy leaves that poise or swing,
The callas their white cups unfold,
And faintest chimes of odor ring
From silver bells with tongues of gold.

"Oh, wondrous gift, in goodness given,
Each hour anew our eyes to greet, —
An earth so fair, so close to heaven,
'T was trodden by the Master's feet.

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"I am His creature, and His air
I breathe where'er my feet may stand;
The angels' song rings everywhere,
And all the earth is Holy Land."

It is God Himself Who "makes us glad" with the yearly remembrance of the birth of His only begotten Son. As He spoke, and light shone forth, on the first day of creation, so to-day He makes the Everlasting Light shine out upon a darkened world. It shines at midnight, too, that the contrast may be stronger, and our joy the greater. It is a very different night from that terrible one, when at midnight there was a great cry made in all the land of Egypt, such as never had been there before, nor shall be hereafter, for it came to pass at midnight that the Lord slew every first-born Egyptian child, so that there was not a house wherein there lay not one dead. In the land of the Jews who had been freed at the sound of that midnight lamentation, a Child was born, centuries later, on Christmas night, and a great cry of angelic joy was heard; for, by that Child, the whole captive world was to be set free from the slavery of sin.

He came when the stars were shining, He of Whom Balaam had said, when he saw the visions of the Almighty: "A Star shall rise out of Jacob"; and of Whom Isaiah had said that He shall be to heaven its everlasting light, so that sun and moon shall be needed not, when days of mourning and nights of pain are forever ended. His small sweet face was seen by flickering torch or lantern-light; yet, before the dazzling effulgence of His glory, the angels had veiled their faces, in realms afar, beyond the skies. He lay, humble and silent, on Mary's stainless breast in Bethlehem's stable, He Whose royal place had been upon the great white throne in the highest heavens, and Who had been wont in His omnipotence to be borne by the cherubim, and on the wings of the docile winds.

The shepherds came and gazed with fond harmless freedom on Him, of Whom Isaias had said that He should feed His flock like a shepherd. Yet had Isaias also said that He should be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and be dumb as a lamb before the shearers, even as He, the Eternal Word, was dumb that night on Mary's knee. He lies there to-day, as He lies upon the altars of His Church, quiet and peaceful, with the love-light in His beautiful eyes, waiting to make us glad. It is He, and He alone, Who can make us glad truly, with real, lasting joy; for He is Himself the one great gift that has any abiding, actual worth,—the gift of God, which is Jesus Christ His Son. Surely all Christian hearts must cry out to Him, with St. Paul, on Christmas Day: "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift!"

OUR LADY OF PAIN

SUNDAY IN THE CHRISTMAS OCTAVE

"UNDER the influence of fear," says St. Augustine, "we support the cross of Christ with patience; under the more inspiring influence of hope we carry the cross with a firm and valiant heart; but under the consuming power of love we embrace the cross with ardor."

Ah, divine Babe of Bethlehem! under what influence didst Thou embrace the cross? How soon did suffering come to Thee, Thou sinless One? When and where didst Thou first know pain; and who dared first bring Thee, O Source of all imaginable beatitude! face to face with woe?

Alas! when did He *not* know pain? Born in a stable in the bleak December, cradled on straw, an ox and an ass for His courtiers, — you and I, sinners, would have felt acutely

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the cold and the strangely instantaneous mortification of the senses; and how then was it with Him, the Sinless? If we could see for a moment the capacity for suffering which the Infant Jesus possessed, if we could realize — as we cannot — all that He endured, I suppose we should die of that amazing view of pain.

For we must remember what a great theologian has written concerning the exquisite delicacy of His tiny frame. "It was formed by the Holy Spirit, and bears upon its workmanship the marks of that Divine Person's peculiar complacency. It was formed also to suffer exquisitely, in order to accomplish the great work of our redemption. Hence its sensibilities were quickened and refined, and all its capabilities of feeling rendered delicate, and active, and rapid, and acute, with the power of communicating thrills of an intensity which we could hardly comprehend. It was in these respects like no other human body that ever was."

The one who knew it best, and who comprehended it nearest, was Mary the Mother. Do we get in prayer faint glimpses sometimes of what the rapture of the first Christmas octave was to her? As we kneel before the tabernacle, do we dream sometimes how Mary knelt beside the manger? In Holy Communion do we comprehend at all the bliss she knew when she nursed Him at her bosom, and cradled Him in her arms? Our Lady of Joy, our Lady of Joy! by the memory of thy deep, untold delights, grant us, this Christmastide, to share thy joys with thee.

Nevertheless, what does to-day's office tell us? It reminds us, indeed, that this Almighty Word, Who, while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, came to Mary, and came to us, down from His royal throne, was beautiful among the sons of men, and clothed with strength, and armed with might. Yet, in the

gospel, we find the strange words of Simeon's prophecy, as spoken to the happy Mother: "This Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; *and thy own soul a sword shall pierce.*"

How soon will dawn the feast of the Circumcision, when to this Child is given His saving name of Jesus, the sweetest name known among men! JESUS: He shall save His people from their sins! With that name, comes to the Child His first blood-shedding. It would seem that the Church desires to call our attention peculiarly to this point, since she has set aside a Sunday, two weeks later, as the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, while the first day of January is emphatically the feast of the Circumcision, of the cutting, of the suffering, of the sharp incisive pain.

How did the Mother endure this? She of whom it has been said that "she saw the teardrops form in the eyes of the Eternal, and she trembled as she saw," how did she feel when she beheld the blood-drops starting, and foresaw in them the awful portents of the agony in the garden, and of the horrors of the scourging, and of the absolute outpouring from every vein upon the cross? Think gravely, steadily, in the midst of your Christmas joys: "Suffering was the condition of Christ's life. It was the unseasonable companion of His childhood. There was no moment when He was free from it. He told St. Catherine of Siena that during His Infancy He suffered especially every Friday. He was the Crucified Jesus even from the days of Bethlehem. His sufferings exceeded all martyrdoms, even in each single hour of His Infant life." It follows from this, — do you not perceive it? — that she whom we call our Lady of Joy was likewise our Lady of Pain. Her life was bound up with His life, her heart was one with His. All those thirty-three years of unparalleled delight, the Mother, for

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all her unquestionable gladness, was standing, nevertheless, beside the cross.

Would she have chosen a different lot if possible? We know she would not, so long as it was the lot of Him Who was the Life of her life, and without Whom joys for her were dead. But would she have desired a different lot for Him? We know what it is to think we can bear a cross ourselves which we should shrink to see our dearest endure. Would the Blessed Mother have spared her Child His suffering if she could?

Sister Mary of Agreda says that our Lord revealed to her that He never in His human nature exercised the act of choice but once, and that was when He chose suffering. Let us not add many words to this startling revelation. Rather, in the darkness of the stable at Bethlehem, let us kneel beside Mary, bending silently over her Baby with the fresh wound in His innocent flesh. Think long, think quietly. It may be that, as we kneel there, we shall see through our tears those blood-drops shine with a heavenly glory, and the Mother's face reflect their radiant and unearthly splendors; and among the deep lessons we shall learn from the Circumcision, not the least will be this, that suffering is God's angel, and loss for His sake is eternal gain, and that among her deepest joys our Mother counts to-day in heaven her blood-bought title of Our Lady of Pain.

THE MYSTERY OF PAIN

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION

THE world has many plans for the removal of trouble and the alleviation of suffering. Is it so wise and beneficent, after all, in its purposes? Let the Christmas octave teach us, that octave which we hail with "Merry Christmas!" and close with "Happy New Year!"

The festival which began in poverty and darkness went on for eight days of unworldly gladness in a poor stable with the cattle. Then, as Father Faber writes, "the scene changes, and Jesus is shedding His first drops of blood, whether it be by His Mother's hand within the cave, or by the hand of the priest in the synagogue upon the hill." So the glad octave closes with the painful rite of circumcision, when the foretold name of Jesus was given to the Infant Saviour. Can it be that Mary's hand had strength to wield the sacrificial knife, and to draw the red drops of that Precious Blood which should one day flow in swift abundance for the saving of the world? Can it be that His most loving Mother could endure to give pain to her little Child?

We pause, and think, and gradually it dawns upon our astonished minds that, however this may be, Mary must have consented to His suffering; and as she never did anything contrary to God's holy will, and as God wills only what is good and wise, pain must have been the choice of the Infant Jesus.

We turn to His followers, and hear St. John of the Cross asking to suffer and be despised; and St. Teresa, either to suffer or to die; and St. Magdalen of Pazzi, to suffer and not to die; and St. Paul, the Apostle of the Holy Ghost, exclaiming grandly: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We read the pages of theologians. "Pain is necessary to holiness," writes one; "the vicinity of Jesus is a vicinity of delighted grace, for which nature has to pay dearly." Says another: "Like the Cherubim, suffering carries God, which is to carry the Light itself. . . . The soul which perseveres in her patience is sooner or later clothed with a marvellous power, and ends by becoming unconquerable. . . . Suffering, whether of mind or body, borne in a Christian spirit, leads us to wish to suffer."

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O my God ! to wish to suffer? Grant to Thy children, then, this Christmas gift ! Teach us where lies this divine ecstasy, the joy of pain. We gaze upon Thy martyrs, and see the child Agnes laugh in the face of her brutal executioners at their savage threats ; and the Venerable Thomas More go jesting up the scaffold, gay as a bridegroom to the marriage feast ; and St. Lawrence on his red-hot gridiron, saying coolly to his tormentors : "Turn me ; this side is roasted enough." We open that renowned volume, "The Following of Christ," and read : "In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness ; in the cross is joy of spirit. Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly. Account tribulations the greatest consolations. Would to God thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus ! He who knows how to suffer will enjoy much peace."

Then we turn again to the manger, and see the delicate limbs of the Prince of heaven and earth cradled on straw ; He has shed already the first drops of that Precious Blood, which one day shall all be shed to ransom us sinful men. We have overloaded Christmas with natural joys and lavish gifts to one another, till we seem to forget sometimes what things were the choice of God on the first Christmas feast. Yet who of us would not gladly give up all holiday gifts, could we but discover the joy of pain, that pain which, in one form or another, none can escape?

How must people with long lists of presents start at the words of the Oblate Father, Charles Rawes, who with Cardinal Manning founded the Confraternity of Servants of God the Holy Ghost : — "I desire to give Thee all that I have, and to have nothing but Thy gifts. It is a pain and a grief to me to have anything that is given me by others. I desire to have no gifts, no graces, no presents, no ornaments, no apparel, save those that have been in Thy pierced hand" ! How must we, who shrink from a day's fasting,

stand amazed to hear St. John of the Cross declare that the delight of severe penance is sometimes so great that penitents must be warned to practise it only through obedience, lest they do it out of desire for it, and for the pleasure they find in it; and thus doing their own will, grow in vice instead of virtue!

Do not we, with our choice of fine clothes, dainty food, the least trouble, the smoothest ways, dread the use of St. Gertrude's prayer: "For love of Thee, O Thou dearer far than the sons of men, for Thee and for Thy love, I choose from henceforward all that is hardest and most repugnant to nature, for Thy love is infinitely above whatever charms this life can offer me"? We who cry out and complain, if God but touch us sharply, how are we to understand when St. John of the Cross also tells us that we are to love tribulations more than all good things, and are to be at home in the sufferings of Christ, and that there are souls who "would gladly pass through the agonies of death, to enter deeper into God"? Yet it is a blessing to know that such desires are possible to man.

Ah, dear Jesus! humbly we adore the mystery of Thy infant tears and blood. Grant us the clue to that world-wide, life-long enigma, the mystery of pain! Thou hast said that if any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine. Help us to clasp our cross hereafter lovingly, and to learn that Mary deigns thus to lift from His hard bed her Child with the fresh wound on Him, and to give Him to our embrace.

THE WISE KINGS

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

TWELVE days flew by in Bethlehem as though on angels' wings. Cold, darkness, poverty, were borne in meek and patient gladness. It was the wish of the Infant Saviour to suffer, and His Mother's will was so one with His will, her heart so completely in sympathy with His heart, that she would not have had their lot a different one, even if she could. Each sting of cold, each moment of darkness, each pang of poverty, was to her a spiritual communion, a sacrament of the will of God ; and she was more than contented, her cup of unearthly and spiritual gladness filled to the brim. In that dark cave she had with her the Babe of Bethlehem, her God and her all, her heart's delight, the fulfilment of her pure life's hope ; the truest, strongest friendships and loves of earth are but dim types and shadows of her unutterably blessed union and rest with Him. We talk of sympathy, but it is impossible for us to imagine the perfect sympathy which bound this Divine Child to His Virgin Mother, or the heavenly love that shone from His eyes into her eyes, and was reflected thence again. The pathetic and wonderful resemblance of their two faces mirrored clearly the more perfect resemblance of soul to soul. Could we taste her cup of gladness, we would renounce worldly delights gladly ; we would resign all joys of the intellect, if we might share her unequalled knowledge of the deep things of God.

On the twelfth day, a change came over the story, for riches, pomp, learning, found their way into it ; three kings, Wise Men from the East, entered the cave of Bethlehem, seeking another King, and seeking Him to adore Him.

When we meditate upon this incident, it seems one of the strangest events in the life of our Divine Lord. In the far East these men had seen a star, and were strangely moved to follow it; and, when they were led by it to a stable, and to an Infant cradled on straw, with lowly and wonderful faith they fell in homage at His feet. They had brought gifts, and they gave them; then, returning to their country, they preached Christ, and laid down their lives in martyrdom, and went to their Master's kingdom in the realms beyond the sun.

This is one side of the story. We have heard of it from childhood. We have seen in fancy the camels and the servants, and the royal gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; we have stood amazed at the seeming folly of these wise kings who could leave their kingdoms at sight of a star in the heavens, and adore at the feet of a Babe new-born in poverty and cold. We forget that such a story must have another side. What may it have been? As we meditate, it dawns upon us that their traditions, handed down from their fathers, had told them a certain sign would surely, one night, be seen in the heavens; and such a sign did shine out plainly, a wonderful portent called a star, which led them unwavering, unerring, to Jerusalem, "Vision of Peace," where, in that holy city, the sacred books of the Jewish wise men confirmed the ancient Eastern traditions. The Babe they beheld in Bethlehem recalled to them other words foretelling Him, hitherto not understood, or misunderstood, but now plainly fulfilled before them.

But there is a profounder explanation of the strange story of the kings. There is that part in it, which is borne by no other or less than God, the Ruler of all.

He Who measureth times and seasons, and in Whose hand are the hearts of men, had spoken long before to Jerusalem by His prophet Isaias, declaring that darkness

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should cover the earth, and a mist the people ; but that the Lord should arise, and His glory should be seen, upon Jerusalem. "And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Ephraim : all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense : and showing forth praise to the Lord."

The Ancient of Days, and King of kings, He Who is from everlasting, and with Whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one brief day, knew that His own appointed time had come for the fulfilment of His own decrees. To these men, who were wise men, He gave far more moving evidence — believe it — than the shining of a star. He gave them that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things that appear not. He fired those royal hearts with the flame of a more than royal strength, the sevenfold flame of His own Holy Spirit, making their wills one with His. Thenceforth their eyes, ears, hands, feet, were God's only. These kings, wise with true wisdom, sought God alone, and seeking Him found Him ; and when they found Him, they knew Him, however strange His guise. The blessing to be pronounced by that Babe, later, upon the clean-hearted, was given to these hearts, purged and made clean by the Spirit's fire ; and they saw and knew their God. The prophecies were accomplished, the word of God was triumphant, the will of God was done. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

Nineteen centuries have gone by since then, and still in many places the darkness covers the earth, and a mist the people ; and even in our own dear land, we Catholics go heavy-hearted, because many whom we love do not see the faith as we see it, or have not courage to embrace it when it is seen. Let us turn the heavy-heartedness into fervent prayer.

They cannot see, while their eyes are dim, or their hearts are full of earthly love ; they cannot follow, till their wills are one with the will of God. Beg Him with tireless prayers to send His Spirit to enlighten and purify them, till they shall see by faith the Babe of Bethlehem in the tabernacle, and falling down at His feet with us adore Him.

THE MANIFESTATION TO THE JEWISH WISE MEN

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

TO pass at once from the great feast of the Epiphany, when the Eternal Child was but an infant, to the feast of His finding in the Temple when He was twelve years old, seems at first sight a sudden and uncalled-for act. Yet the Epiphany is the manifestation or showing forth of Christ, and, on careful consideration, we shall see the usual wisdom of the Church displayed here, as elsewhere, in her ecclesiastical year.

Only a few days ago we were contemplating a wonderful event. Three Wise Kings had travelled from the far-off East, and, passing by the royal city of David, had come to the little town of David, and found there a tiny Child. Him these Wise Men had, with a singular lack of human prudence, adored with glad and willing hearts. The dim traditions in their nations, the gleam of truth among a thousand errors, had been enough for them. Their true hearts, docile to the Holy Spirit's guidance, had led them to the Infant King throned upon Mary's spotless breast ; and they had gone forth from His Presence to carry the glad tidings of Christmas into their homes, and to die for their Lord — so strangely found ! — the death that the martyrs die.

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Later, when Herod sought the young Child's life, it was not to Galilee, nor to the hill country of Judea, that the angel bade St. Joseph flee with his precious charge, but to the rough heathendom of Egypt, to the dark continent of Africa, from whose distant Ethiopia one of the Wise Kings had come on the first Epiphany.

It is a striking thought that no record in Scripture tells us that our Divine Lord ever went to any part of Europe. Cultured Greece and lordly Rome beheld Him not. There is an idea, as Father Faber tells us, that, after His Resurrection, when His risen and spiritualized body was gifted, as those of all the saved will one day be, with agility, subtilty, impassibility, and immortality, He passed, swiftly as light goes, over all the earth, during the great Forty Days, touching with His blessed feet every spot where afterward an altar would be erected, and Mass be said. But the only places that Scripture itself mentions as favored by His mortal and material Presence, outside of Palestine, are Arabia and Egypt. Centuries before, the prophecy had said it: "Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

Wonderful land where the mysterious and voiceless Sphinx faces forever the riddle of the ages, leaving it unsolved; land where the giant pyramids keep to-day the bones of kings who were reigning in barbaric splendor when "Eternal Rome" was not even a name in the mouths of men; land where another Joseph had guarded the sons of that Israel whose name, changed from Jacob, signifies "one who prevaieth with God," — to that land a greater Joseph brought for shelter in His helpless childhood Him Who reigned before Rome or Egypt, and Who should indeed prevail with God for all of us, His availing name being Jesus, because He shall save His people from their sins!

In that strange land our Lord dwelt for several years; and thence, when Herod was dead, He returned with Mary

and Joseph to Nazareth, and, when He was twelve years old, He went up with them to the Holy City, — most truly Jerusalem, Vision of Peace, while He was within its favored walls.

We will not dwell to-day on the loss there of the Divine Child and on the unspeakable grief it caused to those two faithful hearts that were wrapped in His, and belonged, as we all ought, wholly and unreservedly to Him. Neither will we dwell upon the equally unspeakable joy they felt when they found again their Love, Who was their Life. We will limit ourselves to the one thought of our Divine Lord's Epiphany, or manifestation, to the spiritual rulers of His peculiar nation and people, the Jewish race.

When Mary entered the glorious temple, which was still the wonder of men for its beauty and its splendor, although it was not the gorgeous temple that Solomon, prototype of the Prince of Peace, had built, it is easily to be conceived that over her illuminated mind, filled with Scriptural knowledge, there swept the very words the Church, her type, uses for an introit in this season's offices: "I saw a Man seated on a high throne, Whom a multitude of angels adored, singing all together: Behold Him Whose name and empire are to last forever." But other eyes besides hers had seen the angelic hosts on Christmas Eve. Simple, unlettered men had heard the heavenly hymn. At the Epiphany to the Gentiles, Wise Men from heathen lands had recognized in an Infant, twelve days old, their King and God. Here, in His own temple, however, among the wise men of His own nation, with the holy books at hand, and the very walls about them preaching of Him, the Jewish leaders of the synagogue looked on this most wonderful Man-Child, twelve years of age, — and they knew Him not.

Plainly visible, indeed, were the minds of those wise and aged men to the marvellous Boy Who stood among them, —

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and Whom Mary knew to be truly the Man-God, throned forever on His immortal throne. He foresaw that one among the doctors in the Temple would seek Him, years later, by night, stealthily, to learn from Him; and afterward, grown bold through love, would bury Him, mourning over Him with a broken heart. He foresaw, also, how others among them would plot and plan and bring about His death. He loved them all, and their proud hearts felt the strong attraction of His heavenly soul; but it was too true then, as it would be later more painfully true, that "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." He turned His face from them, and went down to Nazareth with His parents, and was subject to them, abiding in obscurity for eighteen years; while, in Jerusalem, those wise Jews still looked for the Messias, Who had already come to them, and they knew it not.

THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY — FEAST OF THE
HOLY NAME

THE second Sunday after the feast of the Epiphany is set apart by the Church to honor the Holy Name of Jesus, which was given to Him on Circumcision Day. Our thoughts turned then with loving compassion and penitential sorrow to the pain that came to our infant Saviour with the giving of that precious name; we remembered His first blood-shedding, His tears, and our guilt that caused His woe. To-day the Church proclaims, with joy and love, His name, His blessed name; and we search the pages of Sacred Scripture and the hymnology of the Church to find and take delight in the pæans wherewith that name

is hailed by saints and angels. Jesus ! Jesus ! His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

This feast has, for its last gospel, instead of the usual one from the first chapter of St. John, that portion of the same apostle's writings which tells of the wedding-feast at Cana of Galilee, and the changing of the water into wine. "On the wedding-day," says a modern writer, with a very delicate sense of the fitness of divine things, "on the wedding-day the bridegroom gives his name to his bride, and it is the sign that, from that day forward, she belongs to him alone. The Church, therefore, would honor the name of her divine Spouse with an especial feast, and no day could be more appropriate for it than this of the marriage at Cana."

How this name has been loved ! Think how Joseph and Mary used to say it, and the air in the holy home at Nazareth was more delicious than the bowers of Eden with the fragrance of that word. Think how the men and women and children in Nazareth called our Divine Lord "Jesus," while angels listened in awestruck reverence, seeing Him numbered thus among the sons of the human race. Think how, long years after, Pilate blazoned that word high on the cross of shame, where a universe hails it there forever till time is done. "Jesus of Nazareth—Jesus of Nazareth." He shall save His people from their sins.

"My Jesus, Thou glory of the angels," writes a holy Benedictine abbess, five hundred years ago, "Thou art sweet music to the ear, sweetest honey to the mouth, heavenly nectar to the heart ! They that taste Thee, still hunger after Thee ; they that drink, still thirst to drink ; they know not what to desire save the Jesus Whom they love. O Jesus, my sweetest Jesus ! Hope of this panting heart ! these tears of love, this cry of my innermost soul, both ask Thee to be mine. Abide with us, O Lord, and

illumine us with light ; drive darkness from our souls, and fill the world with Thy sweetness."

Who first said that name on earth? God's messenger, the great archangel Gabriel. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," he said to Mary, when he brought her the amazing message that she was to be the Mother of the incarnate God. And now, in the introit, the Church to-day proclaims: "In the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth ; and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father. O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth !"

"When I pronounce this name," says St. Bernard, "I bring before my mind the Man Who, by excellence, is meek and humble of heart, benign, sober, chaste, merciful, and filled with every thing that is good and holy ; nay, Who is the very God Almighty — Whose example heals me, and Whose assistance strengthens me. I say all this when I say *Jesus*. Here have I my model, for He is Man ; and my help, for He is God. Here is the electuary, O my soul, hid in the casket of this name *Jesus* ; believe me, it is wholesome and good for every ailment that thou canst possibly have. Ever have it with thee, in thy bosom and in thy hand ; so that all thy affections and actions may be directed to *Jesus*." And St. Peter declares: "There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved."

Were all these thoughts in the mind of Mary, as she sat at the wedding-feast of Cana, and heard the guests say Jesus, Jesus, not knowing what they said? No saint or angel ever realized as she did all the might and the loveliness that lie hidden in that most sweet and powerful name. But no thought of its glories could raise in her the slightest feeling of pride. When, on that day, He wrought the

miracle whereby He turned the water into wine, doubt not but her thoughts and His went on to Calvary; and that Mother and Son foresaw the blood and water that would there gush from His wounded side to save our race. Jesus! Jesus! His name shall be called Jesus — for He shall save His people from their sins.

Listen thoughtfully to St. Paul, on this day when we are considering the glory of our Saviour's name. "Brethren, Christ *humbled* Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. *For which cause* God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

Christ humbled Himself. This is the road whereby even the Man-God went to His exaltation and His exceeding glory. The path of utter humiliation and of a shameful death led Him up the heights that were to lift His name high above all names through the eternal years. It is a lesson of supreme importance for those who are striving to work for God in the face of immense difficulties, of constant opposition, insult, misunderstanding, and of apparent defeat for a time. It is a lesson for all who are tempted by pride or envy or avarice, or by any vice whatever. Christ humbled Himself — yes! and became obedient, — yes! even to death upon the cross. And, *therefore*, He shall be called Jesus! Jesus! and, *therefore*, He shall save His people from their sins.

THE WEDDING FEAST

THE gospel for the second Sunday after the Epiphany records an incident unique in the world's history, yet the event which it concerns is of constant occurrence, and the incident is repeated in a spiritual way many and many a

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THE INNER LIFE OF THE SOUL

“One thing alone is of any importance,— the adorning our souls with the graces which shall fit them for God’s final reward; and all other things are only worth considering as far as they are subservient to that end.”

IF we meditate on the thirty years that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph spent together, there comes to us, with a sense of holy envy, and like a dream of heavenly loveliness, a glimpse of what the life of that most holy Family was. We find it hinted at by Father Faber when he says, “There is a fuller heart in Mary’s face, as of one who has been living in the awful intimacy of God,” words evidently founded upon that saying of Venerable Mary of Agreda that our Blessed Lord had in His Mother all the intimacy and perfection He had wished for from the whole human race, and of which our sin had disappointed Him.

The Scripture tells us an amazing thing about God,— that His delights are to be with the children of men. Put this thought with that other astonishing one, the intimacy of God, and add to them the third consideration that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are given to us as our perfect examples, and then see what conclusion follows. Is it not that we, with our selfish, indifferent hearts, are not only dear to God, but yearned after as His delights; and that it is possible for us—even us—to enter into intimacy with Him?

What is this intimacy? What value has it? Let us call it by another more customary name.

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It is the hidden, interior, supernatural life of the soul.

In one sense this is common to all. There is a life, and each man in his measure knows it, which we live to God alone. The pagan knows in his blindness, and the sinner in his sin, and the doubter in his doubts, that there is a God Who watches him personally, and Who, one sure day, will punish or reward ; and all have with Almighty God their interior secret dealings, which will be made manifest at last, and prove that He never left any soul without its opportunity of salvation. The Christian knows that at his Baptism a life began within him, of which the graces increase with each prayer uttered, each sacrament received, each good deed done. And saints know that they come at times almost face to face with God, as when Moses talked with Him on Sinai, or Philip Neri felt His presence in the Roman catacombs.

But, besides this, there exists a life, founded upon our Baptism, rising in endeavor and practice far higher than the mere obligatory keeping of the commandments of the Church, having no limit to its possibilities, until it reaches the heights of sanctity in a perfect union with God. This is what, in spiritual phraseology, is called the interior or hidden life which a soul leads when it seeks, with more or less intensity of purpose, for the divine intimacy.

This life is confined to no one class or condition of Christians. It has been practised by the beggar in the streets and the peer of the realm, the married man at his trade and the mother by her fireside, the nun in her cloister, the seamstress at her needle, and the school-girl at her books, the soldier in camp, the king on his throne, the priest at the altar, the Pope ruling the Church. It is possible to all, beautiful and soul-satisfying beyond words to tell. In what does it consist?

We may put it very simply thus : that God is to the soul

more lovely and lovable than any one earthly can possibly be ; that no matter how many are our friends, how dear, how good, one often wants to go away from them, and be alone with Him ; that to please Him is pleasanter than to please all besides ; and that, if His delights are to be with us, we will make our souls as white as possible for His sake, and taste how delicious it is to be with Him.

Thomas à Kempis used to leave his recreation at times, saying that Some One was waiting for him in his cell. So, One more beautiful than any child of man is waiting for us in the tabernacle, with a treasure of holiness and of joy to lavish upon us, if only we on our part wait with Him. And in the cell of our hearts the Spirit of God is waiting, till we quiet earth's noises, and listen to Him alone.

That there are difficulties in the way to the hidden life is certain. It requires penance and self-discipline, and it has its trials and its sorrows, sometimes excruciating and extreme, though its hopes and joys far outweigh its pains. Nevertheless, we are being called with special distinctness to lead this spiritual life. Non-Catholics are printing and reading our spiritual books. The lives of our saints, and the writings of our ascetic and mystical theologians, are to be found in public libraries, whence any one can take them. Consequently, men not of our faith look closely to see if we practise what we profess. Let them live what life they will themselves, let them talk what scandal they will against the Church, they nevertheless expect a holiness, unlike their own, and like our books, from the Church's sons and daughters.

Shall we not decide to study this life, and enter upon its road? Let us take for our encouragement these words written by Father Faber, who has given us most fascinating glimpses into the possible beauty of the inner life of the soul : —

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“Think of a little child trying to get at the handle of a door to open it, when it is too small to reach it. Any one would of course help it, by opening the door for the little thing. No more can God help opening the door for us, when we pray for high graces. God is more touched at our trying to reach that handle than words can say.”

HE WHO COMETH

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

THOUGH the gospel for Advent Sunday corresponds, to a noticeable extent, with that for the final Sunday after Pentecost, there is between them a marked difference. Throughout the one there sounds an almost unbroken note of awe and dread. But to-day, though we hear again of the distress of nations, and of men withering away for fear, and for expectation of what shall come upon the whole world, in the midst of these terrors are read the cheering words : —

“When these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads ; because your redemption is at hand.”

Throughout the office for the day rings a singular note of joy and trust. “Exert,” the collect cries, “exert, O Lord ! Thy power, and come.” “None of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded,” says the introit ; and the gradual and offertory repeat the cry. Those who live during Advent in the Church’s spirit find it to be, indeed, a peaceful season of waiting for the coming of the Lord.

It is a calm Lent of recollection before the joy of Christmas ; the feast of Mary’s Expectation sets the keynote to it, bringing us into union with her immaculate heart, as she waited for the day when she would look first upon the face

of her Child Who was her God. Let us draw near, and kneel beside her on this Advent Sunday, and learn from her what Advent really is.

The word means *coming*; the season of Advent is that in which we are called to think upon the first coming of Christ to be our Saviour, and His second coming to be our Judge. When Mary prayed and waited in those unequalled Advent days before the first Christmas dawned, what did she think and feel?

Perhaps she was scarcely conscious that she thought or felt at all. In complete union with the God she bore within her, His will was hers; she lived on His life far more than that unborn Saviour lived on hers. The Child, Whose face she yearned to see, will come, at the last great day, and we shall see His face. Why should not our Advent be like hers?

We know the answer. Between us and Mary's peaceful joy stands the dark spectre, sin.

Cardinal Newman has this very subtle thought among a thousand others. "Every sin," he says, "has its history; it is not an accident; it is the fruit of former sins in thought or deed; it is the token of a habit deeply rooted and far extending. . . . They are all connected; they tend to a whole; they look towards an end; and they hasten to their fulfilment."

We know well that no such history belonged to the sinless Mother; but for us the dread which hangs so darkly about the Advent season is justly there. Who has not a history of sin in his past career, some habit deeply rooted and far extending; and all these things look indeed towards an end, and hasten to their fulfilment—their final unveiling and doom at the final day! Yet, for all her children, the Church exclaims this Sunday: "Exert, O Lord! Thy power, and come," and still she speaks her dauntless

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word of trust: "None of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded."

Think again on the bliss of Mary, Mother of God, during the last of those Jewish Advents, when for thousands of years prophets and people had cried in vain for their God to come, — in the first of those Christian Advents, when truly He had come, though men knew it not. Can she sleep at night or speak by day, in the rapture of that unbroken union, her spotless holiness linked with the Divinity in a manner unknown before and never to be known again? Does she not seem to herself to move ever among "pure lilies of eternal peace, whose odors haunt her dreams"? Do not angels kneel ever in her presence, plainly visible to her who has received the gift of the Divine Maternity? Do not her ears hear heaven's hosannas ring about her, as around the Holy of Holies, the most sacred tabernacle of the most mighty Lord? Can you or I in the slightest degree imagine the rapture that filled to the brim the chosen Mother's soul?

Can we?

One day of this holy season, you and I, please God, will kneel in the confessional and before the altar, and our souls will be fed with those "most nourishing sacraments" left by Jesus Christ in His one true Church for the use of sinful man. One day of this holy season, the true Christ, God and Man, will be within us, as really as His mother bore Him hiddenly within her all these Advent days. My God! the bliss of Mary in some degree awaits each child of Thine.

Let us but seek Him gravely, patiently, taking dryness and desolation as our penance; let us but "wait for Him," till the day break, and the shadows flee away, no matter how hard the trial be, brought by our sins upon us; still let us cry through all, unconquered: "Exert, O Lord! Thy

power, and come." In the end, we "shall not be confounded." In God's own good time, and in the Holy Spirit's power, something unknown before will come upon us — something we never shall forget ; a strength, a reverence, a peace will fill our souls, and uplift them into a new union with God, for which we shall never be able to thank Him enough.

And then, looking on to the final Advent, while still we shudder at its terrors, we shall be in perfect peace. We shall know *Who it is that cometh*, even Jesus Whom we have fed upon, and held in our hearts, and loved and welcomed with Mary ; and kneeling then before our God, Who was on earth our Lover and Best Beloved, we shall say to Him what He will understand : "*Recordare, Jesu pie ! — Ah, remember, Jesu sweet !*"

THE WRITTEN WORD

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

IN the epistle for the second Sunday in Advent, we find these words : "Whatever things were written, were written for our instruction ; that, through patience and the consolation of the Scriptures, we may have hope. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ ; that unanimously with one mouth ye may honor God."

These words lead us to consider a further Advent of our Blessed Lord, in addition to those of which we spoke last ; and that is, His advent or coming to us in the pages of Holy Writ. So full are they of Him, that learned and saintly souls have looked upon the Scriptures as another tabernacle. As an example, let us consider the celebrated

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founder of the Sulpicians, Jean Jacques Olier. His eminent French biographer, Monsieur Faillon, tells us that his great desire was that his followers and true disciples should live the life of Our Lord ; and he recommended to them, as one great means for the attainment of this end, the assiduous study of the actions of this Divine Master as recorded in the Gospels, and the interior sentiments that animated Him in the performance of these acts. He, himself, was accustomed to read the sacred books, kneeling and with uncovered head. His Bible was kept on a little throne in his room ; and, in his profound reverence and faith, he used, as he entered or left the room, to adore the Holy Spirit of God residing in the holy volume. The book, a veritable relic, preserved in the seminary of St. Sulpice, was ornamented with extraordinary magnificence. On one cover, in the centre, was an image of the Sacred Host, the true Word of God under the Eucharistic veil, surrounded by six winged cherub heads ; on the other cover was the picture of a book, the written Word of God, surrounded by tongues of flame. In each corner of each cover was a cherub head.

The wise and devout priest taught in eloquent language that the true Word of God, or that which God says *in Himself*, is incomprehensible, God saying always all that which He is, and all that He knows ; and this is immense and infinite. But, in the Scriptures, he continued, we read only a little syllable of what that immense voice pronounces in itself, we see only very imperfectly the thoughts of God. And while we wait the time when we shall understand the infinite Word, the explanation of the eternal secret of God, we must keep our minds reverently attentive to the revealed Word, and to that portion of the divine wisdom which He makes manifest in His Scriptures, having them before us as the oracle whereby God speaks to us, as the ark and the tabernacle where He wishes to be adored and consulted.

We are also told, in Monsieur Olier's life, that he was most humbly and practically devoted to the hierarchy of the Church, and especially to the visible head of the Church on earth, the Holy Father at Rome. By this means he was preserved from the mistakes of many men of his time and ours, who read the Scriptures each in his own fashion, misinterpreting them, and perplexing themselves and others; while he always tried to follow with sincere faithfulness the precept of to-day's epistle, "that unanimously with one mouth ye may honor God."

Holy Scripture would be a far other thing than it is to the world to-day, if all nominal Christians regarded it as this great servant of God was accustomed to do. It is with humility, with reverence, with self-abnegation, that we must approach that wonderful book, never dreaming that we, poor, ignorant, finite creatures that we are, can expect to fathom its unfathomable depths. It is true that we shall find there much to charm the taste, feed the intellect, enchant the keen reasoning sense implanted in us by the hand of God. What else could come from the study of what St. Catherine of Siena calls the "sweet first truth"? All true joys must necessarily be the portion of those who constantly contemplate the Divine Fulness and the Source of perfect and unfailing joy.

But we must let ourselves be led by the infallible voice of that infallible authority which is vested with the panoply of the unerring Spirit of God. Bishop Gay wisely teaches: "As regards the science of the saints, the science of religion, the science of God, esteem it most highly, love it passionately, and study it as much as your capacity and your state will allow. You cannot know the Holy Gospel too well. You can never be learned enough in that science which was all the glory and all the doctrine of St. Paul, the science of Jesus and of Jesus crucified. But — the more

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humble of mind you are, the more rapid and the greater will be your progress in the science of God." The Bishop was speaking to Carmelites; but he distinctly says that, in these instructions to them, "it has appeared to us many times that we were speaking to the whole world."

On December eighth we celebrate that beautiful feast of obligation, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. She who is our pattern in her holy life, her intense humility, her ardent love, is our pattern, too, in the study of the Bible. Giving herself from her earliest years to God's service in the temple, her mind was saturated with the Hebrew Scriptures; the psalms of David were her constant songs; the mysterious sayings of the prophets formed the yearning of her soul. With desire she desired the Coming, the Advent, of the promised Messiah, Whose future advent at the last great day too many now desire to put far off, into an eternity of delay. Let us follow, rather, the spotless Virgin's example, and try, as she did, to find everywhere the traces of the Eternal Word of God in His written and revealed Word, the Holy Scriptures, as interpreted by our Holy Mother the Church. Then we shall learn to cry ardently: "Come, Lord Jesus! tarry not. How long, O God, how long?"

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

THE EIGHTH OF DECEMBER

THE feast of the Immaculate Conception, — the feast of our Mother's peculiar grace, the grace she would willingly have forfeited her title of Mother of God rather than lose, — who of the sin-stained race of man can speak worthily of it?

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Gather earth's purest and loveliest things together, the lily of the valley and the whitest of roses, the snowflakes still falling untouched by soil of earth, the untarnished clouds of heaven, the pearl from the sea-depths and the diamond clear as the dew, the babe with the waters of baptism still upon its brow, and the dying saint with the cleansing oils not dry upon him, the angels from the never-sinning choirs, and Michael from his high place where he looks up, unmarred by slightest fault or imperfection, reverently but steadily, upon the face of God : what are they but glad types and images of her who is fairest, purest, immaculate, sovereign lady of the angels, empress of the universe, daughter of the Father, mother of the Son, spouse of the Holy Ghost, queen of the boundless realm where God is king !

Poor blinded people who do not understand us when we use such words as these ! What reply can we give them other than this : "She is our Mother, and the Mother of our Lord. We try to love and honor her as He does." What can we do but pray that they may in time draw near to her, and speak to her, and grow white from living near her whiteness, and pure by thinking of her purity ?

The Jews, it is said, had a tradition that when God created the world, He asked the angels what they thought of this His work, and one of them made answer that it was so vast and so perfect that only one thing was wanting to it, and this was that a voice should be created, clear, mighty, and harmonious, which should fill all the quarters of the world incessantly with its sweet sound, thus day and night to thank the Almighty Creator for His blessings. I think the voice of Mary goes far to meet this need.

She has been beautifully called the Christian's Benedicite, because she is all praise, all thanksgiving ; and "as in old times the servants of God made their Benedicite of seas and mountains, birds and fishes, heat and cold, wells and green

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things, cattle and men, bidding them all to praise, exalt, and super-exalt the glory of the good Creator, so now the Church teaches us to thank in strains of ardent love the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity for the gifts and graces of Mary, and has indulged special devotions to this effect."

Consider thoughtfully with what love and tenderness Almighty God must regard any soul that is wholly devoted to His honor and service, and that strives constantly to please Him and to do His will alone. Then think of that profound saying of St. John of the Cross: —

"When the memory is transformed in God, the operations of the memory and of the other powers are, as it were, Divine. God has entered into possession, by this transformation, as their absolute Lord; guides and governs them Himself divinely by His own Spirit and will, as it is written: 'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' . . . So it was with the glorious Mother of God. Perfect from the first, there was no impression of created things on her soul, to turn her aside from God, or in any way to influence her; for her every movement ever proceeded from the Holy Ghost."

Let us read the words again and again till they sink into the very depths of our hearts. Let us lift our eyes and look upon her, our Immaculate Mother, given to us from the cross, "who never can forget what it cost her to become our mother."

And while the rest and peace that come with the thought of her, more and more quietly and intensely fill our souls grown tranquil in her presence, "as one whom his mother comforteth," — let us beg of her to obtain of God for us that inestimable gift, a perfect oneness of our will with His will, till at last our every movement also shall proceed like hers from the Holy Ghost, and our hearts shall become, in their love and purity and meekness, humble copies of her

spotless heart, which from the first was the very temple of Deity, the immaculate palace of the God of holiness, the true Holy of Holies on earth.

I AM THE VOICE

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

AMONG the figures that gather around the holy childhood of our Divine Saviour is one that attracts our peculiar love and reverence ; it is that of him whose birthday came a few months earlier than the birthday of Him Who is the Eternal. We know him as St. John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, the immediate precursor of the Messiah, the cousin of our Lord. Christ said of him that there had not been a greater born of woman ; few came so near to sharing Mary's prerogative of the Immaculate Conception ; he is a marvel to-day in heaven ; yet, when men asked of him, " Who art thou ? " his singular reply was this : "*I am the voice*, — the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord !"

Only the voice ! a thing that has no shape, nothing the hand can touch or the eyes can see. Only a voice ! dying away upon the air, leaving no trace. Greatest of men — and only a voice !

The profound humility of the words awes us, as we think upon them. What was the life of this most holy, most humble servant of Jesus ? Dwelt he ever close beside Him ? Was his the bliss of being nearest and dearest to Jesus always, from crib to cross, from Nazareth to Calvary, from Mary's knee to the throne of God ? We know it was not so. But did they — the Child Jesus and the child John — play together innocent games, which the angels watched

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with a heavenly delight? Did they pull flowers for Mary, Mother most blessed? In their marvellous infancy, which took the first step, which spoke the first word, and what were the words they said?

We know not. This only we know — this amazing thing, that the playmate, the cousin, the friend of Jesus, in order to do the will of Jesus, left His visible presence, and went away from Him into the wilderness, to sojourn there alone.

St. Francis de Sales has called this a most striking example of detachment. Is it the only one the Christmas season contains? On the eighteenth of December occurs the feast of our Lady's Expectation. Did she not spend it herself on the rough road to Bethlehem? Was not that painful journey the journeying of the poor, with all its trying attendant circumstances? And was it no trial of her submission, no disturbance of her tranquillity, that the birth of her Son should take place in Bethlehem rather than in the peaceful and hallowed home of the Annunciation, where Gabriel told her first of her high destiny, and God the Holy Ghost came upon her, filling her with such rapture as the highest seraphim never knew?

Look at to-day's epistle. "Rejoice in the Lord always," St. Paul exclaims; "again, I say, rejoice. . . . The Lord is nigh. . . . The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

St. John the Baptist had caught the very essence of his Master's spirit: "Behold, I come, *to do Thy will, O God.*" And something more than the visible presence of Jesus, something lovelier than that beautiful face of His, something sweeter than those tones of sweetest music, drew him away into the desert, as, later, it drew the Mother on to Bethlehem and away from Nazareth, and as afterwards it drew her to stand beside the cross. The will of God — the will of God — this was the keynote of their lives. Their meat

and drink was to do that will, as He was to say later, in His infinite condescension, that it was His.

Is it ours ?

Let us ask ourselves this question earnestly, during the Advent season. It is a chief means of preparation for Christmas joys. How many things seem fearfully bitter, and hard to do or bear, until we sweeten and soften them with this adorable will. And then — what matters it where He calls us or what He bids us do? In union with Him, our God becomes indeed our all, and we become to ourselves only a voice ; yes, less than a voice ; and the peace of God settles upon the happy soul. That soul shares the joy of the Virgin Mother ; for, as the apostle writes, it forms Jesus Christ in the heart to the praise and glory of God. Almighty God, looking down from heaven, sees His children by adoption become the living images of His divine and only begotten Son, and His great heart is glad. May He grant us this Christmas gift, to do His will alone !

“ O Jesus merciful ! draw near
In Thy compassions deep,
As on our weary way we go,
And watch beside us keep.

“ There is a deeper, holier peace
Than the lulling of our pain ;
And a sweeter calm than that which sleep
Sheds over heart and brain.

“ It is the soul’s surrendered choice,
The settling of the will,
Lying down calmly on the cross,
God’s purpose to fulfil.

“ For this I need Thy presence, Lord !
My hand held fast in Thine.
Infuse Thou through my spirit faint
An energy divine.

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“Feed me with love; imprint on me
Thine awful kiss of peace;
Let me be still upon Thy breast,
Nor struggle for release.

“And sanctify my weakness, Lord!
Nature's extreme distress
Is just the time when it can learn
God's glory to express.

“Stamp in, O God! at any cost
The likeness of Thy Son.
Filial submission to Thy will
Is heaven itself begun.”

LOVE

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

IT is the fourth Sunday in Advent, a day for profound peace and for sweetest expectation, when we shall do well to draw very near to Mary and Joseph, and learn from them how Christmas should be kept. This night will teach us that Love shall be lord of all.

Unto what does the Infant Jesus come? To riches, luxury, a throne, a palace? He comes to poverty, contempt, neglect, to wintry cold and a manger-bed. But He comes to the arms of a Mother whose holiness is immaculate, and whose love is more ardent than the seraphim's; and Jesus is content.

Few things, perhaps, betray so thoroughly Protestants' lack of the real spirit of meditative prayer and contemplation as their continued misunderstanding of a true Catholic's veneration for the Blessed Virgin. Sister Mary of Agreda says, as we have already quoted, that our Blessed Lord had in His Mother all the intimacy and perfection He had

wished for from the whole human race, and of which our sin had disappointed Him. If a Protestant be inclined to call this statement excessive, can he deny that Mary at all events enjoyed for thirty-three years a special union and intimacy with God, of a most marked and peculiar nature?

Let us enter the stable with the Wise Men or the shepherds, — would to God that it might be with the self-forgetful faith of the Wise Men, or the shepherds' meek humility! — and let us kneel humbly at Mary's knee. Who worships Jesus with them must needs kneel there. Look reverently now, as Mary does, on Him the Infant God. We indeed with her, as Father Faber says, we with her, privileged by faith as she by sight, may watch His pulses rise and fall, feel His warm breath against our faces, kiss His living lips; and yet, "it is the wonderful, the terrible, the all-knowing, the unbeginning God, Who lies so little and so calm on Mary's knee."

Abide there long in reverent silence. What is the lesson taught us? Do Catholics say anything of Mary that is beyond her tremendous dignity? Is it not, rather, that non-Catholics do not comprehend the real nature and dignity of the Son of Mary? By that, we gauge her greatness which God Himself constituted and planned. In Bethlehem's stable she gave Him what He wanted most, — the heart's true love. For what do we see in the Christ Child's face? What do His throbbing pulses say? What is the meaning of those strong and audible heart-beats, strange to hear in a little babe?

It means that His heart comes nigh to breaking with love for God and man. Nay, more, far more; it means that His heart is the special dwelling-place of God the Holy Ghost, of that Divine Person, Who in the Blessed Trinity is Love itself, as the Father is Power, and the Son is Wisdom, and yet, supremely and forever, these Three are One. It means

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that with no less a love than God the Holy Ghost, that Blessed Babe, with His great name, Jesus, yet unnamed by man, loves you and me. Weak, ignorant, sin-defiled, fain to hide our faces in shame before the calm gaze of the Undeified and Holy, the truth remains, *He loves us*. Do we find in Scripture more amazing words than these, knowing ourselves to be what we are, and God to be what He is — that He “so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son”? This was the Eternal Father’s Christmas gift to man. Do we comprehend now with trembling rapture our Lord’s words to St. Catherine of Genoa: “If you knew how I love a soul! But this will be the last thing that you will know in this world; for to comprehend it would kill you.”

What Christmas gift does He ask of us? An answering love. To this intent, in the day’s epistle for the Mass at daybreak, are the words: “He saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost; Whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” *He Who is Love will teach us how to love.*

Ask of God that great blessing, a special and true devotion to His Holy Spirit. Our example is the Mother of Jesus, the spouse of the Holy Ghost. It is the duty and high privilege of every one of us, “to form Jesus Christ in our hearts to the praise and glory of God,” — so Holy Scripture teaches. Each one of us in his degree is summoned to this high calling. “Whosoever shall do the will of My Father, Who is in heaven,” our Master said, “he is my brother, and sister, and mother.” The Holy Ghost, by Whose overshadowing power God was made man in Mary’s womb, effects this mystical work of grace in the souls of men.

THE DIVINE DARKNESS OF CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS EVE

AS Christmas approaches, if we could look into the hearts of Catholics, what various thoughts would we find! Perhaps, in most, the memory of the final Advent, so urgently pressed upon us in this season at first, would be now almost eclipsed by the thought of that other Advent when the Child Jesus came, and of the festival so near at hand, which commemorates His happy coming. There will be plans for household gatherings, for games and gifts; plans for Church decorations and fine music; novenas will be made, and consciences cleansed for the Christmas communion; in some homes there will be sad faces and heavy hearts, thinking of one a year since joining in the planning, and now numbered with the dead.

But everywhere the cry will be "Happy Christmas!" It is the feast of happiness, we say. Let us go in meditation quietly to the first Christmas, and see where its great joy was found.

It is Christmas Eve, a Thursday, the twenty-fourth of December, and day is done. Through the streets of a little village, in the land of Judea, St. Joseph and the Mother of God have wandered, homeless and houseless, seeking in vain for shelter. There are no gifts for them, no friends, no food, no warmth, no welcome. Such were the joys and glories of the first Christmas Eve. At last, in a stable, with ox and ass for comrades, they made their home.

On the hills about that village the white flocks lay sleeping, under the Advent moon we watch to-night, the moon that shall fall when the Lord Christ comes again. When it was midnight, the blue skies opened, and the simple shep-

herds saw angels coming, and heard unearthly music, such as all earth's choirs cannot match on Christmas Day.

We can never tell or even dream the glory of that first Christmas night and its angelic sights and sounds. In spirit we may follow the shepherds to the manger, look on Mary's more than angel face, and gaze on Him before Whose beauty stars fade and suns grow dim; we may kiss in spirit those tiny feet, and beg St. Joseph to bless us with that Babe's tiny hand. It is well for us if we do this, for we have caught one of the true joys of Christmas, before which poverty and grief grow dumb. But do you think we have found yet the rapture of the first Christmas night?

Let the heavenly brilliance die, and the *Gloria* cease, and the angels pass away. Send back the shepherds to the hill-tops, to wonder and then to sleep. Let the beasts in the lowly stable close their blessed eyes, that have seen such sights to-night as creatures never saw before. Let the moon sink beneath the hills, and darkness cover the earth, and silence brood like the Spirit-dove above it. Then let us think of the happiest and holiest of mothers, alone with her God, Who is her Child.

Let us kneel also in that darkness, away from friend and companion, earth's joys and lights put from us, and let us entreat Mary, our Mother, to share with us the rapture of the divine poverty, the divine loneliness, the divine darkness of that Christmas night. Do you think she would have exchanged one moment of it for all earth's warmth and household joys and costly gifts to-day?

In that cold and darkness He lies before her, Whose Heart holds a fire which shall one day flash into the seven-fold flame of the Holy Ghost. She sees the face that the prophets yearned for; the eyes look into her eyes, the lips smile back her smiles. She kneels to this her God, and she adores Him, with a humility far beyond that of the hum-

blest saint. And lo ! the Child's arms are held out to His Mother. It is lip to lip now, eye to eye, and heart to heart ; for the Lord hath come to His own !

Even St. Gertrude's impassioned words fail to express adequately the Virgin-Mother's joys : —

“Lift up thine eyes, O my soul ! behold and see the power of thy King, the grace of thy God, the love of thy Saviour, now that thou art so near to Him. Take now thy rest. See how immense the glory is for which thou hast despised the world. See how complete the good is for which thou hast chosen to wait.

“O Love, whose kiss divine has such sweetness, Thou art that fountain after which my thirsting soul doth pant. Thine are all the transports of my heart.

“How ineffable is this union ! How infinitely far this close familiarity with Thee is above all other manner of life ! How enrapturing is Thy fragrance ! What fulness of bliss to breathe the peace divine, the largeness of mercy there is in Thee ! Thou art the rich and overflowing treasure of manifold consolation. O Love ! bring me into Thy mystic storerooms, and give me to drink of the wine Thou keepest therein. For all the vessels which contain it are filled with God, and the Holy Spirit filleth them even to the brim.”

Ah, the glory and the beauty of the divine Christmas darkness ! May the day come soon and surely, when the poor, and the sad and the lonely, the rich and the happy, gathering about His altars where evermore in the crib of the tabernacle the Christ is waiting, and evermore the Star of Bethlehem burns, unfailing, in the altar-lamp, shall see, from the nest of that wounded Heart where the Dove lies hidden, and from those chalices filled with the Holy Spirit even to the brim, His fires blaze forth to warm and heal them, till we shall crave earthly gifts no longer, in the rapturous soul-satisfying fulness of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE happiest day of all the year has dawned, the day that we instinctively call Happy Christmas. "It would be unlawful to be sad to-day," exclaimed Pope Leo the Great in his Christmas sermon, "for to-day is Life's birthday; the birthday of that Life Which, for us dying creatures, taketh away the sting of death, and bringeth the bright promise of the eternal gladness hereafter. . . . Rejoice, O thou that art holy; thou drawest nearer to thy crown. Rejoice, O thou that art sinful; the Saviour offereth thee pardon. Rejoice, O thou Gentile; God calleth thee to life."

This cry of the great Pope is echoed in the lovely roadside songs of his own Italy, with a most touching simplicity and sweetness, in the following stanzas:—

"Behold, my heart, the Babe divine!
This night He left the skies,
And born on earth for sins of thine,
In that rough manger lies.
Canst thou behold, and yet be cold?
Or look with careless eyes?"

"He came in winter's frost and cold,
That thou shouldst warmèd be;
That heavenly light should thee enfold,
In midnight shades came He.
Come, meet Him here, with love sincere,
For much hath He loved thee."

Christmas Day seems, distinctively, to be the feast of simple, childlike joy and love. How could it be otherwise, when it is the feast of angels and of shepherds; of a simple carpenter and an immaculate maiden-mother; of the little

white lambs of Bethlehem, and of the undefiled and innocent Lamb of God? How could it be otherwise, when the very gates of heaven above are flung open, and the star-strewn skies become a pathway for seraphim and cherubim, and the angels' feet are beautiful on the Judean mountains? What a glad, glad song rings from angel lips, clearly audible to the ears of those favored men who were tending their blessed sheep on the first Christmas night: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."

Must not the echo of that angelic canticle have rung in those shepherds' ears all their lives through, filling them with peculiar joy? It has rung through the Church of the Infant Jesus ever since, in how many lands and climes!

In New England, people naturally think of Christmas as that time when

"The snow lay on the ground,
The stars shone bright";

but there are lands where Christmas Day is a summer day. Always and everywhere, however, it is, for Christian hearts, a day of joy. Across the continent, in California, it may be mild like spring; and one asks with the poet:—

"Can this be Christmas, — sweet as May,
With drowsy sun and dreamy air,
And new grass pointing out the way
For flowers to follow everywhere?

"With glossy leaves that poise or swing,
The callas their white cups unfold,
And faintest chimes of odor ring
From silver bells with tongues of gold.

"Oh, wondrous gift, in goodness given,
Each hour anew our eyes to greet, —
An earth so fair, so close to heaven,
'T was trodden by the Master's feet.

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"I am His creature, and His air
I breathe where'er my feet may stand;
The angels' song rings everywhere,
And all the earth is Holy Land."

It is God Himself Who "makes us glad" with the yearly remembrance of the birth of His only begotten Son. As He spoke, and light shone forth, on the first day of creation, so to-day He makes the Everlasting Light shine out upon a darkened world. It shines at midnight, too, that the contrast may be stronger, and our joy the greater. It is a very different night from that terrible one, when at midnight there was a great cry made in all the land of Egypt, such as never had been there before, nor shall be hereafter, for it came to pass at midnight that the Lord slew every first-born Egyptian child, so that there was not a house wherein there lay not one dead. In the land of the Jews who had been freed at the sound of that midnight lamentation, a Child was born, centuries later, on Christmas night, and a great cry of angelic joy was heard; for, by that Child, the whole captive world was to be set free from the slavery of sin.

He came when the stars were shining, He of Whom Balaam had said, when he saw the visions of the Almighty: "A Star shall rise out of Jacob"; and of Whom Isaiah had said that He shall be to heaven its everlasting light, so that sun and moon shall be needed not, when days of mourning and nights of pain are forever ended. His small sweet face was seen by flickering torch or lantern-light; yet, before the dazzling effulgence of His glory, the angels had veiled their faces, in realms afar, beyond the skies. He lay, humble and silent, on Mary's stainless breast in Bethlehem's stable, He Whose royal place had been upon the great white throne in the highest heavens, and Who had been wont in His omnipotence to be borne by the cherubim, and on the wings of the docile winds.

The shepherds came and gazed with fond harmless freedom on Him, of Whom Isaias had said that He should feed His flock like a shepherd. Yet had Isaias also said that He should be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and be dumb as a lamb before the shearers, even as He, the Eternal Word, was dumb that night on Mary's knee. He lies there to-day, as He lies upon the altars of His Church, quiet and peaceful, with the love-light in His beautiful eyes, waiting to make us glad. It is He, and He alone, Who can make us glad truly, with real, lasting joy; for He is Himself the one great gift that has any abiding, actual worth,—the gift of God, which is Jesus Christ His Son. Surely all Christian hearts must cry out to Him, with St. Paul, on Christmas Day: "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift!"

OUR LADY OF PAIN

SUNDAY IN THE CHRISTMAS OCTAVE

"UNDER the influence of fear," says St. Augustine, "we support the cross of Christ with patience; under the more inspiring influence of hope we carry the cross with a firm and valiant heart; but under the consuming power of love we embrace the cross with ardor."

Ah, divine Babe of Bethlehem! under what influence didst Thou embrace the cross? How soon did suffering come to Thee, Thou sinless One? When and where didst Thou first know pain; and who dared first bring Thee, O Source of all imaginable beatitude! face to face with woe?

Alas! when did He *not* know pain? Born in a stable in the bleak December, cradled on straw, an ox and an ass for His courtiers, — you and I, sinners, would have felt acutely

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the cold and the strangely instantaneous mortification of the senses; and how then was it with Him, the Sinless? If we could see for a moment the capacity for suffering which the Infant Jesus possessed, if we could realize — as we cannot — all that He endured, I suppose we should die of that amazing view of pain.

For we must remember what a great theologian has written concerning the exquisite delicacy of His tiny frame. "It was formed by the Holy Spirit, and bears upon its workmanship the marks of that Divine Person's peculiar complacency. It was formed also to suffer exquisitely, in order to accomplish the great work of our redemption. Hence its sensibilities were quickened and refined, and all its capabilities of feeling rendered delicate, and active, and rapid, and acute, with the power of communicating thrills of an intensity which we could hardly comprehend. It was in these respects like no other human body that ever was."

The one who knew it best, and who comprehended it nearest, was Mary the Mother. Do we get in prayer faint glimpses sometimes of what the rapture of the first Christmas octave was to her? As we kneel before the tabernacle, do we dream sometimes how Mary knelt beside the manger? In Holy Communion do we comprehend at all the bliss she knew when she nursed Him at her bosom, and cradled Him in her arms? Our Lady of Joy, our Lady of Joy! by the memory of thy deep, untold delights, grant us, this Christmastide, to share thy joys with thee.

Nevertheless, what does to-day's office tell us? It reminds us, indeed, that this Almighty Word, Who, while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, came to Mary, and came to us, down from His royal throne, was beautiful among the sons of men, and clothed with strength, and armed with might. Yet, in the

gospel, we find the strange words of Simeon's prophecy, as spoken to the happy Mother: "This Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; *and thy own soul a sword shall pierce.*"

How soon will dawn the feast of the Circumcision, when to this Child is given His saving name of Jesus, the sweetest name known among men! JESUS: He shall save His people from their sins! With that name, comes to the Child His first blood-shedding. It would seem that the Church desires to call our attention peculiarly to this point, since she has set aside a Sunday, two weeks later, as the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, while the first day of January is emphatically the feast of the Circumcision, of the cutting, of the suffering, of the sharp incisive pain.

How did the Mother endure this? She of whom it has been said that "she saw the teardrops form in the eyes of the Eternal, and she trembled as she saw," how did she feel when she beheld the blood-drops starting, and foresaw in them the awful portents of the agony in the garden, and of the horrors of the scourging, and of the absolute outpouring from every vein upon the cross? Think gravely, steadily, in the midst of your Christmas joys: "Suffering was the condition of Christ's life. It was the unseasonable companion of His childhood. There was no moment when He was free from it. He told St. Catherine of Siena that during His Infancy He suffered especially every Friday. He was the Crucified Jesus even from the days of Bethlehem. His sufferings exceeded all martyrdoms, even in each single hour of His Infant life." It follows from this, — do you not perceive it? — that she whom we call our Lady of Joy was likewise our Lady of Pain. Her life was bound up with His life, her heart was one with His. All those thirty-three years of unparalleled delight, the Mother, for

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all her unquestionable gladness, was standing, nevertheless, beside the cross.

Would she have chosen a different lot if possible? We know she would not, so long as it was the lot of Him Who was the Life of her life, and without Whom joys for her were dead. But would she have desired a different lot for Him? We know what it is to think we can bear a cross ourselves which we should shrink to see our dearest endure. Would the Blessed Mother have spared her Child His suffering if she could?

Sister Mary of Agreda says that our Lord revealed to her that He never in His human nature exercised the act of choice but once, and that was when He chose suffering. Let us not add many words to this startling revelation. Rather, in the darkness of the stable at Bethlehem, let us kneel beside Mary, bending silently over her Baby with the fresh wound in His innocent flesh. Think long, think quietly. It may be that, as we kneel there, we shall see through our tears those blood-drops shine with a heavenly glory, and the Mother's face reflect their radiant and unearthly splendors; and among the deep lessons we shall learn from the Circumcision, not the least will be this, that suffering is God's angel, and loss for His sake is eternal gain, and that among her deepest joys our Mother counts to-day in heaven her blood-bought title of Our Lady of Pain.

THE MYSTERY OF PAIN

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION

THE world has many plans for the removal of trouble and the alleviation of suffering. Is it so wise and beneficent, after all, in its purposes? Let the Christmas octave teach us, that octave which we hail with "Merry Christmas!" and close with "Happy New Year!"

The festival which began in poverty and darkness went on for eight days of unworldly gladness in a poor stable with the cattle. Then, as Father Faber writes, "the scene changes, and Jesus is shedding His first drops of blood, whether it be by His Mother's hand within the cave, or by the hand of the priest in the synagogue upon the hill." So the glad octave closes with the painful rite of circumcision, when the foretold name of Jesus was given to the Infant Saviour. Can it be that Mary's hand had strength to wield the sacrificial knife, and to draw the red drops of that Precious Blood which should one day flow in swift abundance for the saving of the world? Can it be that His most loving Mother could endure to give pain to her little Child?

We pause, and think, and gradually it dawns upon our astonished minds that, however this may be, Mary must have consented to His suffering; and as she never did anything contrary to God's holy will, and as God wills only what is good and wise, pain must have been the choice of the Infant Jesus.

We turn to His followers, and hear St. John of the Cross asking to suffer and be despised; and St. Teresa, either to suffer or to die; and St. Magdalen of Pazzi, to suffer and not to die; and St. Paul, the Apostle of the Holy Ghost, exclaiming grandly: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We read the pages of theologians. "Pain is necessary to holiness," writes one; "the vicinity of Jesus is a vicinity of delighted grace, for which nature has to pay dearly." Says another: "Like the Cherubim, suffering carries God, which is to carry the Light itself. . . . The soul which perseveres in her patience is sooner or later clothed with a marvellous power, and ends by becoming unconquerable. . . . Suffering, whether of mind or body, borne in a Christian spirit, leads us to wish to suffer."

O my God ! to wish to suffer? Grant to Thy children, then, this Christmas gift ! Teach us where lies this divine ecstasy, the joy of pain. We gaze upon Thy martyrs, and see the child Agnes laugh in the face of her brutal executioners at their savage threats ; and the Venerable Thomas More go jesting up the scaffold, gay as a bridegroom to the marriage feast ; and St. Lawrence on his red-hot gridiron, saying coolly to his tormentors : "Turn me ; this side is roasted enough." We open that renowned volume, "The Following of Christ," and read : "In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness ; in the cross is joy of spirit. Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly. Account tribulations the greatest consolations. Would to God thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus ! He who knows how to suffer will enjoy much peace."

Then we turn again to the manger, and see the delicate limbs of the Prince of heaven and earth cradled on straw ; He has shed already the first drops of that Precious Blood, which one day shall all be shed to ransom us sinful men. We have overloaded Christmas with natural joys and lavish gifts to one another, till we seem to forget sometimes what things were the choice of God on the first Christmas feast. Yet who of us would not gladly give up all holiday gifts, could we but discover the joy of pain, that pain which, in one form or another, none can escape?

How must people with long lists of presents start at the words of the Oblate Father, Charles Rawes, who with Cardinal Manning founded the Confraternity of Servants of God the Holy Ghost : — "I desire to give Thee all that I have, and to have nothing but Thy gifts. It is a pain and a grief to me to have anything that is given me by others. I desire to have no gifts, no graces, no presents, no ornaments, no apparel, save those that have been in Thy pierced hand" ! How must we, who shrink from a day's fasting,

stand amazed to hear St. John of the Cross declare that the delight of severe penance is sometimes so great that penitents must be warned to practise it only through obedience, lest they do it out of desire for it, and for the pleasure they find in it; and thus doing their own will, grow in vice instead of virtue!

Do not we, with our choice of fine clothes, dainty food, the least trouble, the smoothest ways, dread the use of St. Gertrude's prayer: "For love of Thee, O Thou dearer far than the sons of men, for Thee and for Thy love, I choose from henceforward all that is hardest and most repugnant to nature, for Thy love is infinitely above whatever charms this life can offer me"? We who cry out and complain, if God but touch us sharply, how are we to understand when St. John of the Cross also tells us that we are to love tribulations more than all good things, and are to be at home in the sufferings of Christ, and that there are souls who "would gladly pass through the agonies of death, to enter deeper into God"? Yet it is a blessing to know that such desires are possible to man.

Ah, dear Jesus! humbly we adore the mystery of Thy infant tears and blood. Grant us the clue to that world-wide, life-long enigma, the mystery of pain! Thou hast said that if any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine. Help us to clasp our cross hereafter lovingly, and to learn that Mary deigns thus to lift from His hard bed her Child with the fresh wound on Him, and to give Him to our embrace.

THE WISE KINGS

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

TWELVE days flew by in Bethlehem as though on angels' wings. Cold, darkness, poverty, were borne in meek and patient gladness. It was the wish of the Infant Saviour to suffer, and His Mother's will was so one with His will, her heart so completely in sympathy with His heart, that she would not have had their lot a different one, even if she could. Each sting of cold, each moment of darkness, each pang of poverty, was to her a spiritual communion, a sacrament of the will of God ; and she was more than contented, her cup of unearthly and spiritual gladness filled to the brim. In that dark cave she had with her the Babe of Bethlehem, her God and her all, her heart's delight, the fulfilment of her pure life's hope ; the truest, strongest friendships and loves of earth are but dim types and shadows of her unutterably blessed union and rest with Him. We talk of sympathy, but it is impossible for us to imagine the perfect sympathy which bound this Divine Child to His Virgin Mother, or the heavenly love that shone from His eyes into her eyes, and was reflected thence again. The pathetic and wonderful resemblance of their two faces mirrored clearly the more perfect resemblance of soul to soul. Could we taste her cup of gladness, we would renounce worldly delights gladly ; we would resign all joys of the intellect, if we might share her unequalled knowledge of the deep things of God.

On the twelfth day, a change came over the story, for riches, pomp, learning, found their way into it ; three kings, Wise Men from the East, entered the cave of Bethlehem, seeking another King, and seeking Him to adore Him.

When we meditate upon this incident, it seems one of the strangest events in the life of our Divine Lord. In the far East these men had seen a star, and were strangely moved to follow it ; and, when they were led by it to a stable, and to an Infant cradled on straw, with lowly and wonderful faith they fell in homage at His feet. They had brought gifts, and they gave them ; then, returning to their country, they preached Christ, and laid down their lives in martyrdom, and went to their Master's kingdom in the realms beyond the sun.

This is one side of the story. We have heard of it from childhood. We have seen in fancy the camels and the servants, and the royal gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh ; we have stood amazed at the seeming folly of these wise kings who could leave their kingdoms at sight of a star in the heavens, and adore at the feet of a Babe new-born in poverty and cold. We forget that such a story must have another side. What may it have been ? As we meditate, it dawns upon us that their traditions, handed down from their fathers, had told them a certain sign would surely, one night, be seen in the heavens ; and such a sign did shine out plainly, a wonderful portent called a star, which led them unwavering, unerring, to Jerusalem, "Vision of Peace," where, in that holy city, the sacred books of the Jewish wise men confirmed the ancient Eastern traditions. The Babe they beheld in Bethlehem recalled to them other words foretelling Him, hitherto not understood, or misunderstood, but now plainly fulfilled before them.

But there is a profounder explanation of the strange story of the kings. There is that part in it, which is borne by no other or less than God, the Ruler of all.

He Who measureth times and seasons, and in Whose hand are the hearts of men, had spoken long before to Jerusalem by His prophet Isaias, declaring that darkness

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should cover the earth, and a mist the people ; but that the Lord should arise, and His glory should be seen, upon Jerusalem. "And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Ephraim : all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense : and showing forth praise to the Lord."

The Ancient of Days, and King of kings, He Who is from everlasting, and with Whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one brief day, knew that His own appointed time had come for the fulfilment of His own decrees. To these men, who were wise men, He gave far more moving evidence — believe it — than the shining of a star. He gave them that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things that appear not. He fired those royal hearts with the flame of a more than royal strength, the sevenfold flame of His own Holy Spirit, making their wills one with His. Thenceforth their eyes, ears, hands, feet, were God's only. These kings, wise with true wisdom, sought God alone, and seeking Him found Him ; and when they found Him, they knew Him, however strange His guise. The blessing to be pronounced by that Babe, later, upon the clean-hearted, was given to these hearts, purged and made clean by the Spirit's fire ; and they saw and knew their God. The prophecies were accomplished, the word of God was triumphant, the will of God was done. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

Nineteen centuries have gone by since then, and still in many places the darkness covers the earth, and a mist the people ; and even in our own dear land, we Catholics go heavy-hearted, because many whom we love do not see the faith as we see it, or have not courage to embrace it when it is seen. Let us turn the heavy-heartedness into fervent prayer.

They cannot see, while their eyes are dim, or their hearts are full of earthly love ; they cannot follow, till their wills are one with the will of God. Beg Him with tireless prayers to send His Spirit to enlighten and purify them, till they shall see by faith the Babe of Bethlehem in the tabernacle, and falling down at His feet with us adore Him.

THE MANIFESTATION TO THE JEWISH WISE MEN

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

TO pass at once from the great feast of the Epiphany, when the Eternal Child was but an infant, to the feast of His finding in the Temple when He was twelve years old, seems at first sight a sudden and uncalled-for act. Yet the Epiphany is the manifestation or showing forth of Christ, and, on careful consideration, we shall see the usual wisdom of the Church displayed here, as elsewhere, in her ecclesiastical year.

Only a few days ago we were contemplating a wonderful event. Three Wise Kings had travelled from the far-off East, and, passing by the royal city of David, had come to the little town of David, and found there a tiny Child. Him these Wise Men had, with a singular lack of human prudence, adored with glad and willing hearts. The dim traditions in their nations, the gleam of truth among a thousand errors, had been enough for them. Their true hearts, docile to the Holy Spirit's guidance, had led them to the Infant King throned upon Mary's spotless breast ; and they had gone forth from His Presence to carry the glad tidings of Christmas into their homes, and to die for their Lord—so strangely found !—the death that the martyrs die.

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Later, when Herod sought the young Child's life, it was not to Galilee, nor to the hill country of Judea, that the angel bade St. Joseph flee with his precious charge, but to the rough heathendom of Egypt, to the dark continent of Africa, from whose distant Ethiopia one of the Wise Kings had come on the first Epiphany.

It is a striking thought that no record in Scripture tells us that our Divine Lord ever went to any part of Europe. Cultured Greece and lordly Rome beheld Him not. There is an idea, as Father Faber tells us, that, after His Resurrection, when His risen and spiritualized body was gifted, as those of all the saved will one day be, with agility, subtilty, impassibility, and immortality, He passed, swiftly as light goes, over all the earth, during the great Forty Days, touching with His blessed feet every spot where afterward an altar would be erected, and Mass be said. But the only places that Scripture itself mentions as favored by His mortal and material Presence, outside of Palestine, are Arabia and Egypt. Centuries before, the prophecy had said it: "Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

Wonderful land where the mysterious and voiceless Sphinx faces forever the riddle of the ages, leaving it unsolved; land where the giant pyramids keep to-day the bones of kings who were reigning in barbaric splendor when "Eternal Rome" was not even a name in the mouths of men; land where another Joseph had guarded the sons of that Israel whose name, changed from Jacob, signifies "one who prevaieth with God," — to that land a greater Joseph brought for shelter in His helpless childhood Him Who reigned before Rome or Egypt, and Who should indeed prevail with God for all of us, His availing name being Jesus, because He shall save His people from their sins!

In that strange land our Lord dwelt for several years; and thence, when Herod was dead, He returned with Mary

and Joseph to Nazareth, and, when He was twelve years old, He went up with them to the Holy City, — most truly Jerusalem, Vision of Peace, while He was within its favored walls.

We will not dwell to-day on the loss there of the Divine Child and on the unspeakable grief it caused to those two faithful hearts that were wrapped in His, and belonged, as we all ought, wholly and unreservedly to Him. Neither will we dwell upon the equally unspeakable joy they felt when they found again their Love, Who was their Life. We will limit ourselves to the one thought of our Divine Lord's Epiphany, or manifestation, to the spiritual rulers of His peculiar nation and people, the Jewish race.

When Mary entered the glorious temple, which was still the wonder of men for its beauty and its splendor, although it was not the gorgeous temple that Solomon, prototype of the Prince of Peace, had built, it is easily to be conceived that over her illuminated mind, filled with Scriptural knowledge, there swept the very words the Church, her type, uses for an introit in this season's offices: "I saw a Man seated on a high throne, Whom a multitude of angels adored, singing all together: Behold Him Whose name and empire are to last forever." But other eyes besides hers had seen the angelic hosts on Christmas Eve. Simple, unlettered men had heard the heavenly hymn. At the Epiphany to the Gentiles, Wise Men from heathen lands had recognized in an Infant, twelve days old, their King and God. Here, in His own temple, however, among the wise men of His own nation, with the holy books at hand, and the very walls about them preaching of Him, the Jewish leaders of the synagogue looked on this most wonderful Man-Child, twelve years of age, — and they knew Him not.

Plainly visible, indeed, were the minds of those wise and aged men to the marvellous Boy Who stood among them, —

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and Whom Mary knew to be truly the Man-God, throned forever on His immortal throne. He foresaw that one among the doctors in the Temple would seek Him, years later, by night, stealthily, to learn from Him; and afterward, grown bold through love, would bury Him, mourning over Him with a broken heart. He foresaw, also, how others among them would plot and plan and bring about His death. He loved them all, and their proud hearts felt the strong attraction of His heavenly soul; but it was too true then, as it would be later more painfully true, that "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." He turned His face from them, and went down to Nazareth with His parents, and was subject to them, abiding in obscurity for eighteen years; while, in Jerusalem, those wise Jews still looked for the Messiah, Who had already come to them, and they knew it not.

THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY — FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME

THE second Sunday after the feast of the Epiphany is set apart by the Church to honor the Holy Name of Jesus, which was given to Him on Circumcision Day. Our thoughts turned then with loving compassion and penitential sorrow to the pain that came to our infant Saviour with the giving of that precious name; we remembered His first blood-shedding, His tears, and our guilt that caused His woe. To-day the Church proclaims, with joy and love, His name, His blessed name; and we search the pages of Sacred Scripture and the hymnology of the Church to find and take delight in the pæans wherewith that name

is hailed by saints and angels. Jesus ! Jesus ! His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

This feast has, for its last gospel, instead of the usual one from the first chapter of St. John, that portion of the same apostle's writings which tells of the wedding-feast at Cana of Galilee, and the changing of the water into wine. "On the wedding-day," says a modern writer, with a very delicate sense of the fitness of divine things, "on the wedding-day the bridegroom gives his name to his bride, and it is the sign that, from that day forward, she belongs to him alone. The Church, therefore, would honor the name of her divine Spouse with an especial feast, and no day could be more appropriate for it than this of the marriage at Cana."

How this name has been loved ! Think how Joseph and Mary used to say it, and the air in the holy home at Nazareth was more delicious than the bowers of Eden with the fragrance of that word. Think how the men and women and children in Nazareth called our Divine Lord "Jesus," while angels listened in awestruck reverence, seeing Him numbered thus among the sons of the human race. Think how, long years after, Pilate blazoned that word high on the cross of shame, where a universe hails it there forever till time is done. "Jesus of Nazareth—Jesus of Nazareth." He shall save His people from their sins.

"My Jesus, Thou glory of the angels," writes a holy Benedictine abbess, five hundred years ago, "Thou art sweet music to the ear, sweetest honey to the mouth, heavenly nectar to the heart ! They that taste Thee, still hunger after Thee ; they that drink, still thirst to drink ; they know not what to desire save the Jesus Whom they love. O Jesus, my sweetest Jesus ! Hope of this panting heart ! these tears of love, this cry of my innermost soul, both ask Thee to be mine. Abide with us, O Lord, and

illumine us with light ; drive darkness from our souls, and fill the world with Thy sweetness."

Who first said that name on earth? God's messenger, the great archangel Gabriel. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," he said to Mary, when he brought her the amazing message that she was to be the Mother of the incarnate God. And now, in the introit, the Church to-day proclaims: "In the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth ; and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father. O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth !"

"When I pronounce this name," says St. Bernard, "I bring before my mind the Man Who, by excellence, is meek and humble of heart, benign, sober, chaste, merciful, and filled with every thing that is good and holy ; nay, Who is the very God Almighty — Whose example heals me, and Whose assistance strengthens me. I say all this when I say *Jesus*. Here have I my model, for He is Man ; and my help, for He is God. Here is the electuary, O my soul, hid in the casket of this name *Jesus* ; believe me, it is wholesome and good for every ailment that thou canst possibly have. Ever have it with thee, in thy bosom and in thy hand ; so that all thy affections and actions may be directed to *Jesus*." And St. Peter declares: "There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved."

Were all these thoughts in the mind of Mary, as she sat at the wedding-feast of Cana, and heard the guests say Jesus, Jesus, not knowing what they said? No saint or angel ever realized as she did all the might and the loveliness that lie hidden in that most sweet and powerful name. But no thought of its glories could raise in her the slightest feeling of pride. When, on that day, He wrought the

miracle whereby He turned the water into wine, doubt not but her thoughts and His went on to Calvary; and that Mother and Son foresaw the blood and water that would there gush from His wounded side to save our race. Jesus! Jesus! His name shall be called Jesus — for He shall save His people from their sins.

Listen thoughtfully to St. Paul, on this day when we are considering the glory of our Saviour's name. "Brethren, Christ *humbled* Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. *For which cause* God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

Christ humbled Himself. This is the road whereby even the Man-God went to His exaltation and His exceeding glory. The path of utter humiliation and of a shameful death led Him up the heights that were to lift His name high above all names through the eternal years. It is a lesson of supreme importance for those who are striving to work for God in the face of immense difficulties, of constant opposition, insult, misunderstanding, and of apparent defeat for a time. It is a lesson for all who are tempted by pride or envy or avarice, or by any vice whatever. Christ humbled Himself — yes! and became obedient, — yes! even to death upon the cross. And, *therefore*, He shall be called Jesus! Jesus! and, *therefore*, He shall save His people from their sins.

THE WEDDING FEAST

THE gospel for the second Sunday after the Epiphany records an incident unique in the world's history, yet the event which it concerns is of constant occurrence, and the incident is repeated in a spiritual way many and many a

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time. In the town of Cana of Galilee there was a wedding ; but this wedding was memorable above all other weddings, and its joy was a joy beyond words to tell, for Jesus and Mary, His mother, were there. What a festival ! Can we imagine its happiness ? It matters little whether the feast was in a palace or a cottage, among the wealthy or the poor. Jesus and Mary were there, and with them was heaven.

God's ways are different with different men. To some He gives sickness, to others health ; to some a home, to others loneliness ; to some success, to others failure. On earth are bitterest weeping, hunger and cold and desperation ; man's hand is against his brother man, and man's voice is raised in loud and wild rebellion against his Maker. When we look only at these things, and listen only to these, our hearts fail within us ; we are tempted to ask if there be a God, or if He cares for the men He made. Yet, if we calm our troubled hearts, an answer comes to us, a divine peace-giving answer to earth's anguished cry. For each soul consolation is ready, and the comfort of God is near. But we must be silent and listen for the Holy Spirit's voice.

Sorrow and suffering come with sin ; and sorrow and suffering must be, until sin shall cease. We may argue against this and deny it, but we cannot alter the fact. As St. Benedict Joseph says : " It is necessary to know how to suffer." Penance, whether voluntary or involuntary, must be performed. The Epiphany season shows to us the Man Christ Jesus, living, for thirty years on earth, a working-man's plain ordinary life. As God, He knew each pang and woe of men as none other can know them. He was God, and the power was His to relieve it all by a word, a sign, an act of His will ; yet the word remained unspoken, and, through the ages, never has that sign of all-conquering power been given. For three years He preached and

ministered to men, but even then to the Jews only; and He ended his life in seeming failure, and in a criminal's ignominious death. But the life that for thirty-three years He led in lowliness, poverty, and pain, was a life of perfect sanctity and consummate union with God.

"He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps."

There is no other key to the mystery, which remains a mystery still. The simple, daily, individual doing of God's holy will is the only guiding thread out of the labyrinth of the heart-rending anguish of this world's distress. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine."

There is a marriage feast to which Jesus always comes; it is the mystical union of the soul with God, a life of which the marriage bond is but the type, a life of perfect holiness, where God is the supreme centre and the one all-absorbing Love. Any one familiar with the saints' lives, becomes aware that the conditions of hunger, want, cold, seemed changed for them, and that, literally, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all other things were added to them. Elizabeth Canori Mora, when urged by her anxious children to draw near the fire, in the bitterly cold weather, answered that such a flame of divine love burned within her, that she felt no need of other heat; and who shall reckon up all the holy souls to whom the Blessed Sacrament has been for many days, and even for years, almost their only food? The great Doctor of mystical theology teaches us that the Holy Ghost is the author of this spiritual union. By His might the body itself became spiritualized, and lived in its degree as the angels live.

Such love of God the wedded Catherine of Genoa knew, and the virgin Catherine of Siena; Nicholas Flüe, husband, father, and hermit, felt it, and the young Jesuit Stanislaus

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Kostka, and the Redemptorist Liguori at ninety years, and the Roman matron Anna Maria Taigi, and the saintly seamstress of St. Palais, crying rapturously from her bed of poverty and pain, "Oh, if you knew what joy!" St. Elizabeth of Hungary, widowed, childless, and outcast, felt it, crying: "Ah, my Lord and my God! mayest Thou be all mine, and I all Thine!" One whole night, in ecstasy, the Saint of Assisi, divinely enamored of poverty, said no words but these in his long vigil of prayer: "My God and my all! My God and my all!" His true disciple St. Bonaventure prayed: "Be Thou my riches, my delight, my sweetness, my food, my deliciousness, my rest!" The poor lay-brother, Felix of Cantalice, sang: —

"Who tasteth Thee hath no desires,
Nothing needeth earth can give."

Such were the men and women to whose nuptial feast of their pure souls with the heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus and Mary gladly came.

My God! teach us the saints' methods, and grant to us the saints' wedding feast with Thee! Self-denial must go before it, and much loss of this world's joys. It was when their own wine failed at Cana's feast, that Jesus gave the new wine of the vintage of His power. May He fill us with the fire of His Holy Spirit, for thereby only will the clue to the remedy of earth's manifold miseries be found.

STRENGTH AND SWEETNESS

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

"**L**IVE wholly in our Lord," says St. Francis de Sales. "Let Him be the atmosphere in which your heart breathes at ease."

These words recur to us in our meditation for this third Sunday after the Epiphany. How aptly the epistle of the Sunday illustrates the character of St. Francis !

“Be not wise in your own conceits. To no man rendering evil for evil. Providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men. Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved ; but give place unto wrath. . . . Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.”

In the life of St. Francis, we are struck with amazement by his profound learning and serene self-possession, by his marvellous power of converting heretics, by his extraordinary fluency of thought and his swiftness of pen, by his practical knowledge of men and things, and by his unbroken union with God.

What man is this who wrought with such might on souls that, in the jubilee of 1602, sixty-two thousand communions were made in the church of Thonon, where, only a little while before, he had gone in and out with holy heroism among a handful of Catholics, in a place given over to heresy? What manner of man is this, who dared to say, when conversation once turned on the characteristics of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis of Paula, and St. Francis Xavier : “Yes, either it will cost me my life, or I shall one day be another St. Francis” ; and who, hearing his great spiritual daughter, who was afterwards to be raised like him to the altars of the Church, cry out in her loving admiration : “Father, I shall yet live to work for your canonization,” made answer calmly : “Daughter, God can work miracles, but they who are to labor for my canonization are yet to be born !”

We read his life and ask ourselves how he had time for his multitudinous occupations ; his writing those famous books on the Devout Life and the Love of God ; his minute and

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perfect performance of his episcopal duties ; and that other minute, singularly patient, and tender work of the direction of individual souls. How could he pen those long, considerate, helpful letters? How bear with the crowds that flocked to hear and consult him? How mould, and bring to ripe and holy maturity, that Visitation Order, which is one of the fairest of the Church's gardens where the Lord comes down with joy to gather lilies? And how, through all this, we ask again, was his unbroken union with God maintained? Let us hear him tell the secret.

“ We must either love God or die ; or rather, we must love Him in order to die, that is, we must die to all other love to live for His love alone. O what a blessed thing it is to live in God only, to labor for God only, and to rejoice only in God ! Henceforward, with the help of God's grace, no one shall have any hold upon me, and no one shall be anything to me, save in God and for God only. *I hope to arrive at this when I shall have been truly humbled before Him.* Live, God ! It seems to me that all is as nothing to me save in God, in Whom and for Whom I love souls with the greater tenderness. O, when will this natural love of kindred, of worldly proprieties and considerations, of correspondence, of sympathies, and of graces, be purified and reduced to the perfect obedience of pure love and of the good pleasure of God? Presence or distance will make no change in the solidity of a love which God Himself has formed.”

If we were to question men as to the chief characteristic which strikes them in St. Francis de Sales, perhaps the most of the replies would be summed up in the one word : *Sweetness*. A little consideration, however, will change the expression to three words : *Sweetness and strength*. It has been truly said of him that it was from a hot and vehement nature that there came forth a spiritual bloom whose beauty

and fragrance were perfect in an extraordinary degree. He himself assured the Bishop of Belley that anger was one of his severest temptations. "There were two passions he felt assail him the most strongly, — anger and love," says a biographer. "The latter he could subdue by management, by giving it a right and holy direction ; but as for anger, he had 'to take his heart in both hands, in order to stifle it.' " Thoroughly he turned both these passions to a lawful end, and became possessed wholly with the passionate, freely expressed love of God, and of souls in and for God ; while he was burning all the time with a holy zeal for the divine glory, which was far stronger in its lasting effects than anything the power of an angered will can do ! It may be averred that out of a real Samson-like strength came forth his almost unequalled sweetness. In fact, the more we study his admirable, singularly imitable, and eminently practical example, the more his strength appears to us ; and the more conscious we are of a mighty master in God's hierarchy, ruling with tenderest but firmest will the minds that consent humbly to his potent influences. Madame de Chantal writes to him for leave to change her method of prayer. Remark his answer : —

"Let us linger a while longer in these lower valleys, kissing our Lord's feet, and He will call us to kiss His lips when it pleases Him. Go on in your usual way till I see you again."

Sweetness ? Yes, with the very perfume of the ointments of the Beloved ; but firm as rock in his decision and watchful control of the impetuous soul intrusted to his spiritual direction.

These distinguishing characteristics increased in him till he was able to make a declaration which fascinates us by its enchanting unison of that supernatural sweetness and strength : —

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“For some time past, full of oppositions and contradictions which have come to break in upon my tranquillity, I have seemed to derive from them a sweet and delightful peace, which nothing can surpass ; and I see in this a presage of the approaching establishment of my soul in its God, which is truly not merely the great but the only ambition and passionate desire of my heart.”

May God, through His saintly servant's intercession, grant us grace to show forth in our lives these blessed traits of St. Francis de Sales' character, and to share in his unalterable peace !

OUR LADY OF JOY

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FORTY days after the birth of Jesus Christ, and in humble obedience to the Jewish law, she who is the Immaculate Virgin goes up to the Temple for the ceremony of the purification, and bears with her for His legal ransoming Him Who is, one day, on a hill near to that same city of Jerusalem, to ransom a whole world. The ancient prophecies were fulfilled ; suddenly the Lord had come to His Temple : yet, who there knew Him ? The venerable Simeon, and Anna the aged widow, whose lives were spent apart from worldly pleasure, in prayer and holiness and fasting, and in watching for the Lord.

At the close of Simeon's long life, the passionate desire of that long life was granted him : *he had seen the Christ*. “The face of Jesus was close to his. Heaven had come to him on earth. Was it not the loveliest of mysteries to see those arms, that were shaking and unsteady with long lapse of time, so fondly enfolding the ever young eternity of

God? Was it not enough for Simeon? Oh, was it not unspeakably more than enough?"

Let us now consider, in connection with this event, what our God and our All has done for us in His sacrament of love. The post-communion of this fourth Sunday after the Epiphany accords with our subject: "May Thy gifts which we have partaken of, O God, detach our hearts from all earthly pleasures, and ever refresh and strengthen us with heavenly food"; and the feast of the Purification, occurring February second, has its own mystical light to throw upon the darkness of our minds. It is a feast of the Holy Spirit of God. May He, Who is Love, teach us of love, and fill us with love; for love is the fulfilling of the law.

"He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit," says St. Paul, that great patron of the servants of the Holy Ghost. And St. Bernard writes: "The love of God, or rather that love which is God the Holy Ghost, pouring itself into the love of man and into the spirit of man, binds man to itself. Then God, loving Himself in man, makes man's love and spirit one thing with Himself."

It is distinctly said of Simeon that the Holy Ghost was in him, and that he came by the Spirit into the Temple. Moreover, it is as distinctly said that he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. When that promise was made good, his desires on earth were done, his joy was full. "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace," he sang; "because my eyes have seen Thy salvation."

If this was the rapture of him who held, for a brief moment only, the Joy of heaven and earth in his favored arms, what was the joy of Mary for three and thirty years in the company of her Child? What was her joy in His infancy when she held Him night and day, and fed and

kissed Him, and felt His breath upon her cheek, and saw the light of heaven in His eyes?

Yet—who waits there in the tabernacle? Who comes to us in Communion? Who offers Himself at Mass by the hands of the priest, really, substantially, Body and Blood and Sacred Heart?

We envy Mary—we envy Simeon—for what? Simeon held Him once at a long life's close. We may receive Him, it is possible for us to receive Him, every day. Mary saw Jesus, talked with Jesus, sang to Jesus, was heart to heart with Jesus in silent delight, for eighteen years in the blessed house of Nazareth. Yes, Our Lady of Joy! who shall paint thy joy? "What were all the joys of all the saints to hers? Her very sorrows were so full of joy that she would not have exchanged them for the most ravishing sweetness that ever fettered a holy soul in a perfect captivity of delight."

Yet—let us kneel down before the altar. *Who is here, waiting for you and me?* Only a little door between Him and us, only a silken curtain, a silver vase: we need not turn the key, nor lift the lid. Without noise of words, or sound of footfall, or touch of hand, the faithful heart can enter, led by the Spirit; and can be at home and at peace with the Sacred Heart of the same Lord and Love Whom Mary loved, her God and her All, and ours!

"A spark of flame, a pulse of fire,
In the twilight church aglare!
Is it a star let down from heaven
And anchored in the air?
A golden star in golden chains,
Suspended, sparkling, there.

"Above, below, the shadows creep;
The fragrant night is damp.
Draw closer to the light, my soul!
It is the altar lamp.
A soft and sunny aureole
It sheddeth round, sweet lamp!

"The trembling rays, like fingers, touch
The tabernacle white.
Wouldst fain unlock the little door
With key of amber light ?
A swinging shadow on the floor,
It trembles in His sight.

"Would I could catch thy glittering chains
And draw thee through the gloom !
Thy precious oils my sinful hands
Would silently perfume,
And I would plunge my heart in thee,
And let it there consume.

"The wick of Faith ; of Love the oil,
Wherewith the flames are fed.
Draw up my soul on golden chains,
To burn in thy sweet stead !
O faithful watcher ! let me share
Thy vigil overhead."

They tell of saints who have known by their spiritual senses the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle, though no light revealed the fact ; of saints who have fed upon Him in Communion, and needed no other food ; of saints who saw Him, heard Him, and needed no earthly joys. Cannot He take the place of earthly joys for us ? It will need sacrifice, purification, prayer ; for God fills an empty memory and an empty heart. But is it not well worth our while to empty them, if God — no less than God — will fill them ?

His gifts will detach us from all earthly pleasures, if we will but allow Him to detach us ; and then, "God, loving Himself in man, makes man's love and spirit one thing with Himself."

It is easy to gainsay and dispute these things. Suppose, instead, that we were humbly to accept and act on them ? *If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine.* May our Lady of Joy teach us what true joy is ; and may the Spirit of God grant us, not only to taste, but to keep, that joy which is one of His own special fruits.

PEACE IN PAIN

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

“**W**HO suffers,” writes Fénelon, “as those souls suffer whom God purifies in the other world? Who suffers as they do, without stirring under God’s hand, without seeking relief, without trying to shorten the time of trial ; with a peaceful love each day increasing, with pure joy in the midst of pain, with a meek simplicity which never dreams that anything done for God can be a sacrifice? Let us try to found this purgatory on earth, as men found hospitals.”

What could the wise Archbishop of Cambrai mean by this, he so skilled in the science of the saints and the direction of souls, he so learned, yet so obedient, so near to kings and princes, yet so meek and placid in heart? But he goes further in his statements.

“The first Christians,” he says, “had ceaseless joy within sight of their one great hope ; their eyes beheld heaven forever open. Crosses, insults, torture, death, had no power to depress them. They knew that infinite liberality kept record of these griefs ; they could not suffer enough ; they were overjoyed to be thought worthy of the deepest humiliations. And we, cowardly souls, do not know how to suffer, or we do not know how to hope ; the lightest crosses overwhelm us, even those made by our own pride or imprudence or false sensibility.”

The cross must come ; we know this well. Marked with its sign at our Baptism, we walk under its shadow our whole life long ; and in our gayest hours and our brightest sunshine, none can tell when its dead weight will not fall upon our shoulders, and crush us to the earth. Yet an infallible

voice says to us, in the epistle for the fifth Sunday after Epiphany, — to the glad and the sad, to the whole household of the faith: "Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts . . . and be ye thankful."

Ah, my God! were they any more Thy children and Thy ransomed ones, those early Christians and martyrs who ran eagerly to meet torture and death in steadfast hope of Thee, were they any more Thine, my God! than we who shrink to-day from suffering, and grieve as though our hearts were broken, and as though heaven were but a dream, when Thou callest one of our dear ones away to Thee, Most Dear? Where learned the martyrs peace and joy? Teach us this lesson, so that Thy peace may rejoice our broken hearts, and that we in our pain and trial may nevertheless be glad.

Let us see what holy men declare concerning this divine gift of joy and peace in the cross.

We seek for sympathy in our distress; we dwell, after a death, on the soul beloved and gone; without it, the earth is a desolate spot; we hug the grief to our hearts, and think to keep them empty forever, sacred to a memory. Yet what does St. John of the Cross say? "God makes the soul empty, — that He may fill it." What does St. Bernard say? "Holy soul, *remain alone*, in order that thou mayest keep thyself for Him alone, Whom thou hast chosen above all." What does the mighty Bossuet, the Eagle of Meaux, tell us, with his undazzled gaze fixed grandly upon the Eternal Sun? "Death gives us much more than he takes away; he takes away this passing world, these vanities which have deceived us, these pleasures which have led us astray; but we receive in return the wings of the dove, that we may fly away, and find our rest in God." What does St. Augustine boldly declare to us? "One never loses those whom one loves in Him Whom we cannot lose." And to return to Fénelon: "Whatever cross we may have to bear in the Christian life, we never

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lose that blessed peace of heart which makes us willingly accept all that we suffer, and no longer desire any of the enjoyments of which we are deprived."

Can this be true? Can this height be reached, where the bereaved, the desolate, shall willingly accept all their anguish; nay, more, where they shall desire no longer anything they have lost? shall desire nothing, *actually nothing* of that old-time honeyed sweetness; shall have no longer any wish to hear the voices full of love's music, and no longer any wish to see the vanished faces, to feel the hand's warm grasp, to be sustained by the ever ready sympathy, the watchful care? Listen.

"Everything must die — sweetness, consolation, repose, tenderness, friendship, honor, reputation. Everything will be repaid to us a hundred fold, but everything must first die, everything must first be sacrificed. *When we shall have lost all in Thee, my God, then shall we again find all in Thee.*"

The truth lies here; but will we make it our own? It is possible, alas! to sit down in the silent room with our empty heart, and not allow God, most dear, most beautiful, most good, to fill it. It is possible, only too possible, and too often the case, that we hug our sorrow in a close embrace, and will not let the Spirit of peace and joy enter.

He asks us to "found a hospital of purgatory" for our tried souls here, in peace; to suffer, yet not to shrink under the tender touch of the Divine Physician's hand; He asks us to seek no relief in outward joys; and then He promises us "a peaceful love for Him, each day increasing, with perfect joy in the midst of pain." We deaden His voice with our bitter weeping; we turn away His healing touch, because we will not stop to think what God means for us by this cross which He in His infinite wisdom bids us bear. Oh, for our own soul's sake, let us be silent awhile; let us

put aside even the most tender and Christian sympathy gently, — a Christian will understand; then, patiently, prayerfully, though with no spoken words of prayer, let us be all alone with God. He Who can never change, and can never die, He Who loves you with a love far, far beyond that of spouse, or child, or parent, *He* wishes to speak with you, and to win your personal and absorbing love of Him.

Years ago, a famous director of souls wrote to one in the anguish of recent bereavement: "Try, when you can, to think of the *immense* love God has for you, and is feeling for you at all instants. Rest must come at last with such a thought as that. I would have you try to love God more, to make more frequent acts of love, even if you do not seem to feel them really. This will bring peace. God insists on inheriting the love whose object He has taken from you. He is not content it should all go to sorrow. Hence your way to peace must lie, I am confident, through a warmer, a more tender, a more *personal* love of God. Nothing but love will fill up the void which the taking away of love has caused. God must grow into the empty place. There is no cure but Divine love — not simply Divine worship — but Divine love. God must become more and more *dear*, more and more *desirable*. Then He will become gradually more and more sufficient. He wants you to find your delight, your repose, your compensation, in Him and in His things; but more in Himself than in His things. Delight thou in the Lord."

Have we tried this heavenly remedy for sorrow? Will we try it now? If we will, the peace of Christ shall rejoice in our hearts, and we shall indeed be thankful.

BIDE THOU THY TIME

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

IT is the fashion of our times to look for speedy results and brilliant success. Rome must now be built in a day, and science must put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes; men make haste to be rich, and make haste to spend their riches; and even religion is pressed into the service, and thrust new-fledged and full-blown upon the human race.

Meanwhile the Catholic Church—the old Church—bides her time; and year by year repeats to us the unchanging message of to-day's gospel.

“The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which is the least indeed of all seeds; but *when it is grown up*, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof.”

A certain class of people treat us sometimes to a variety of very depressing statistics as to leakages, losses, iniquities, scandals, among the brethren. In a sense, these may be correct; but is it the best sense, the truest, the highest? Is it the way in which the great God views it finally, in His infinite compassion and unerring wisdom?

Scandals? “It must needs be that scandals come.” If that was true in our Lord's day, shall we *take* scandal from it now, O we of little faith? Two Catholics were passing, some years ago, through a principal thoroughfare of a great city, and one said to her companion, who was a convert:—

“What effect have all these liquor shops upon you, with so many Catholic names above the doors?”

The instant reply was: “It makes me realize that I be-

long to the true Church, — the spouse of Him Who was the Friend of publicans and sinners."

Leakage, losses! Watch the goldsmith put the lump of gold, fresh from the mine, into the fire. See the flames surround it. Has it lost, or gained? The dross is purged away; the fine pure gold remains.

You may remember Dean Swift's sharp, pungent saying, how he wished that when the Pope weeded his garden, he would not throw the weeds over the fence. He was a Protestant who said this, and his words deserve the profound consideration of his fellow-believers. But the Church, the true Mother of Souls, even while she knows perfectly that none can be lost out of her fold and from eternal bliss without their own free will and fault, can never cease mourning for those apostate souls, who were bought by the blood of Christ, and were hers indeed, but hers because they were His. As His blood flowed freely for them, so her tears flow. But, none the less, in spite of all the sins, defections, apostasies of her children, she stands infallible, indefectible, the one holy Church of the one holy God.

You may argue: "By their fruits you shall know them." No argument of that sort can harm her, who is the mother of the saints and queen of the martyrs in every age and clime. If you say, however, that the question is not of the Catholic Church, but of some of her individual members, we must change our ground. "It must needs be that scandals come, but woe to him by whom they come!" The Church must be reviled, insulted, accused, calumniated, like her divine Master and Lord. But — is it impossible that the scandal may not sometimes come through you and me?

There is a standard which the Catholic Church holds up to her faithful children, — a lofty standard, yet a lowly, for it is rooted in profound humility, and its aim is no less than this: "Be ye perfect, as also your heavenly Father is per-

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fect." The lives of the saints keep that wonderful pattern before us; the very crucifix above all our altars reminds us of the self-sacrifice, the love, required of us; the voice of our Lord re-echoes through these latter centuries with special emphasis: "Learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls." We are learning — mathematics, music, languages, anything the world is learning. How many of us, as eagerly, as thoroughly, are learning the science of the saints?

Look at St. Paul's words to the Thessalonians in to-day's epistle, how he lovingly praises them, and gives thanks to God for them for their faithful service of the true and living God. Consider, on the other hand, how sharply St. John, the beloved disciple, reproves some of his converts, who were not faithful in their service. If the distinction were always clearly and grandly made between the Church, and certain members of the Church, when people talk or write of leakage, losses, scandals, there would be less confusion of ideas and less danger of temptations against the faith, and of slurs from our enemies.

By their fruits, indeed, ye shall know them; and it seems incredible that any candid mind can study calmly the abundant fruits of the Catholic Church throughout the world, and not yield to her claim. Yet it is human nature's habit — fallen human nature in its selfish egotism — to judge by what it sees just around itself; and if what it sees is, for instance, you and me, *what then does it see?*

Alas! how many of us must hide our faces, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" For the Church herself we can always say: —

"Bide thou thy time!
Watch with meek eyes the race of pride and crime.
Sit in the gate, and be the heathen's jest,
Smiling and self-possessed.
O thou to whom is pledged the victor's sway,
Bide thou the victor's day!"

But for ourselves, for you and me, may God in His mercy number us, even here and now, among the saints, that by our fruits, yes, even by such as ours, His true Church may be known, and none may have reason to take scandal from us.

A SEPTUAGESIMA MEDITATION

IN considering the character of St. Paul, two points strike us with peculiar force : his intensity of thought and purpose — what one may almost call his impetuosity — and his tireless strength of perseverance in his upward course. There are no half and half ways with him. Whatever else you may find in him, you will never see the lukewarmness which God so emphatically abhors. When he is a Jew, he is a Jew to the heart's core ; and when he is a Christian, he becomes a very hero among Christians, till the symbols of live flame and rushing wind seem his by right. The note of a trumpet rings through his epistles, and he is the patron of patrons for the three Sundays preceding Ash Wednesday, when we are asking ourselves, with more or less courage, what penance we will do in Lent. One can hardly think of Septuagesima Sunday without seeming to hear his voice cry out, in words that set the keynote for the next nine weeks : —

“Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things : and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty : I so fight, not as one beating the air : but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection.”

Truly has it been said : "The vicinity of Jesus is a vicinity of delighted grace for which nature has to pay dearly." But whether that payment consists in the pain of voluntary penance, or in the harder pain of exterior trial, or interior distress, which God's own hand, touching us sharply, lays upon our shrinking souls, St. Paul assures us that it is well worth the cost. Nevertheless, human nature dislikes penance and mortification. To fast one day, for instance, seems to some of us impossible ; and to fast a whole Lent, not to be dreamed of.

Suppose we grant this ; let us, however, come deeper down to the heart of the matter. How many of us timid people *wish* we could fast ; really wish it as we wish for money, new clothes, amusements ? Count the number of those who ask to be allowed to fast, or to do any penance whatsoever, and offset it with the number of those who seek for dispensations. Who of us in our weakness prays God to give him the great grace to be able to fast ? Who spends these days till Ash Wednesday in a sort of double Novena for that intention ? Do you, or I ?

Shame though it be to say it, half our trouble lies in our lukewarmness. We do not like to take the trouble to conquer ourselves. Yet to lead a spiritual life is to be spiritual ; and the spirit is not the body, but the master of the body. Nay, our very spirit itself, even more than our body, has got to be tamed down and humiliated and subdued by a force superior to its own ; for the soul is the seat of our worst enemy — pride — and if a man is to be truly spiritual, before all things he must be humble.

For us feeble folk, thank God ! there are many ways of mortification, — simple, everyday, commonplace things, that effect a great work of self-discipline, and open a path to closer union with our Lord. We who cannot watch, can rise each morning punctually and promptly ; we who truth-

fully feel we cannot fast, will humbly ask for a dispensation, and faithfully perform the penance given instead ; we can make our loquacious tongues fast from idle words, and our wandering eyes from useless sights. God Himself will teach us, if we only will it.

We begin these three weeks with St. Paul's heroic example, and with his brave words for our guide ; we start on a race where all may run, and all may receive a prize. From heaven his voice reaches us : "So run that ye may obtain." Oh, for his set intensity of purpose ! All this Lent through, may there ring in our ears like a battle-cry : —

"I so run, not as at an uncertainty : I so fight, not as one beating the air : but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection."

And if still the way seem hard to us, we must do one thing more. Look on, past these three weeks and the Lenten Sundays, to Holy Week and Jesus Christ our Brother. What is He then doing, Who is Owner of all wealth and joy and glory in earth and heaven, and Who is set as our example ?

Behold, He goes fasting and footsore, poor and suffering ; He is insulted and spit upon ; He is scourged till His body is one great wound, and then He is lifted on high to the scorn of His enemies, and is nailed naked to a cross. Was it ever more true of any man that his body was chastised and brought into subjection ? Yet He was the Saint of saints — and what are we ?

It is told of St. Peter Favre that he was once asked by a certain nobleman to give him some short method or rule for his spiritual life ; and although St. Peter Favre seems to have had an extraordinary flow of thought and language, his attempt was made in these few words ; none others were needed.

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"I would suggest to you nothing more than this," he said, "to repeat frequently in your heart : —

"Christ poor, and I rich ;
Christ fasting, and I full ;
Christ naked, and I clad ;
Christ suffering, and I living in enjoyment.'"

Having said this, he was silent.

A SEXAGESIMA MEDITATION

WE are likely to think of our Lord while on earth as our great Exemplar, or as our divine Redeemer ; we do not dwell sufficiently on the first and highest aspect of Him, in His pre-eminent office of giving perfect honor and glory to Almighty God. At the earliest moment of His existence He proclaims it : "Then said I : Behold I come : in the head of the book it is written of Me : that I should do Thy will, O God."

He loves us, how dearly who shall tell ! Eternally, unchangeably, with the love of God He loves us ; to us He devotes Himself in life and death ; but there is that which is yet more dear to Him, a devotion paramount to all others, His utterly unlimited devotion to His Heavenly Father, and to His adorable will.

Each of us has something to which his life is, in an ordinary sense, devoted, with more or less intensity of purpose ; and, the world over, in one form or another, the idyl of the patriarchal days is repeated, — Jacob still serves seven years for Rachel, and they seem but a few days because of the greatness of his love. Whether that Rachel be study or ambition or human affection, still man risks all in the endeavor, even while he knows that the end must be

sorrow, parting, and death. He has courage for this, — a ceaseless courage, beginning anew with each new day's sun.

It is a like courage and determination which we must put into the far more important work of our service of Almighty God ; and our first thought must be, after our Lord's example, one of complete devotion to Him. It is partly on this account that St. Paul is so appropriately our patron just now. It stirs our laggard souls to hear his fiery challenge in the Epistle for Sexagesima Sunday : " If any man dare, I dare also," and then to hear the stream of words sweep on : —

"Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren. In labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without : my daily instance, the solicitude for all the churches."

This is what one man could do, whose intense devotion was to the same Lord God we serve.

How are we going to imitate him? Do we think he did all this easily ; and that the journeyings and fastings and stripes and shipwrecks cost him no wear and tear of strength? Ah ! under all else lay the fact that, when St. Paul made an act of charity, he meant it to the full. " O my God ! I love Thee above all things with my whole heart and soul, because Thou art infinitely amiable and deserving of all my love " — the life of St. Paul acted such words out to the letter.

One likes to think of him with his great fearless heart, ready to dare everything, holding nothing back from the

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God Who was truly his All in all ; counting loss his gain, and pain his joy, and earth's treasures dross, if so he may win Christ ; lavishing strength and health and life at the feet of Him Who, on the road to Damascus, deigned to stoop from heaven, and speak with him, and win him to His love. Thinking of him, we think of words written, four centuries later, by one who owes to him, after God, his world-famous conversion, the great African bishop, that other doctor of divine love : —

“ When the soul has taken its flight towards God (and it is love that makes it take that upward flight), marvellously free and superior to all the torments of the flesh, it extends its magnificent wings, and, strong with its chaste love, it darts forward to God, Who calls it, to lose itself in His embrace.”¹

We fancy that they walk and talk together in the fair fields of Paradise, in the radiant rapture of the immortal, fadeless vision of the “ Beauty ever ancient, yet ever new.” The battle they fought so valiantly is ended. They stand there in the court of their King forever, father and son by a spiritual birthright, two of the grandest conversions the world may ever see, proofs incontrovertible of what the love of God has power to do.

Let us beseech them to obtain for us the unflinching courage of their convictions and the tireless might of their love. O my God ! grant to us cowards one spark of it, to set our cold, dull, earth-bound hearts on fire. Make us long to sacrifice everything for Thee. “ Dost thou threaten me with death ? ” said Thy martyr, St. Gordianus, to his persecutor. “ I grieve that I can only once die for my Lord Jesus Christ.” And we can only once live here for Thee ; we can only bear meritoriously the sufferings of one life for Thee ; for in Purgatory we cannot merit, and in Heaven

¹ St. Augustine of Hippo.

A QUINQUAGESIMA MEDITATION 65

there is no more pain. Grant us courage to prove our love by our complete self-sacrifice, and by our thoroughly despising all things else in our devotion to Thee, O God, alone !

A QUINQUAGESIMA MEDITATION

QUINQUAGESIMA Sunday has for its epistle St. Paul's memorable description of charity, while the gospel tells us of the sufferings which our Lord foretold to the disciples should be His, for love of them and the whole human race. Perhaps in all Scripture there are few more amazing words than these : "When as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us." Where can greater proof be found of His infinite compassion and divine love for souls? Yet we cannot expect to feel the full force of them, unless we meditate seriously and long upon them.

The season of Lent is at hand ; in three days Ash Wednesday will be here ; our Mother the Church calls upon us to fast, and pray, and to do penance for our sins. Each one who cannot fast should ask for some practical and methodical work of piety to do instead ; and perhaps few better could be found than ten minutes' serious meditation, every day, upon the Passion of our Lord. This practice can be varied in many ways, some of them being so simple that a child might learn them ; and God alone knows of what immense value to us this practice, faithfully continued through one Lent, would be. Let us consider, then, by His assisting grace, that most helpful spiritual devotion called meditation.

Father Faber has said that our life must be "an unretracted supernatural love, as if it were a part of God's life rather than our own" ; and he also tells us that "a saint is

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a man who can act as well on what he only sees by faith as on what he sees with his eyes ; *faith is the more real of the two to him.*"

On the strength of these words of his, let us, some time during the first day of Lent, kneel humbly before the crucifix, either in church or in our home. St. Teresa says that we may take the posture that is easiest for us, to keep ourselves from distraction ; that which enables us best to make our prayer. But let us kneel at first in the holy presence of God, to beg His aid ; and then ask ourselves : Who is it that suffers ? — What does He suffer ? — Why does He suffer ?

Who is this that suffers ?

Did you ever see a mother when her little child lay dying ? Did you ever wonder how she endured to watch the slight form writhe in anguish, the dear lips become parched and purple, the eyes seek her eyes in piteous pleading, and then grow fixed and dim ; how she endured to hear the faint voice call her by her sweet name *mother*, in a cry she will seem to hear forever, and yet will never hear again ? He Who suffers on Calvary is more to us than child to mother or mother to child. Oh, as we look up and watch Him, are not our hearts breaking with grief and love ?

Yet, why does He suffer ? We know the answer. Shame covers our faces, and our eyes turn away in deep remorse from that blood-stained figure nailed there to the shameful tree. He suffers — God help us ! — for your sins and mine. *We* drove the nails through those innocent hands and those harmless feet ; *we* drove the spear through that blessed heart ; *we* pressed the thorns into His venerable forehead, where the crowns of the universe should be. While we were yet sinners, Christ died *for us*. Can you tell me why grief and love do not overwhelm us ? why these hearts of ours do not break ? One day, one hour, that we cannot endure to remember now, *we* crucified Jesus Christ.

A QUINQUAGESIMA MEDITATION 67

“O take thy stand beneath His cross,
And let the blood from out that side
Fall gently on thee, drop by drop.
Jesus our Love is crucified.

“A broken heart, a fount of tears,
Ask, and they shall not be denied,
A broken heart love's cradle is.
Jesus our Love is crucified.”

What does He suffer? We all must suffer. If we think what He vouchsafed to endure, we shall be better fitted to bear our own distress.

He suffered bodily anguish to an unparalleled degree, because of the unparalleled sensitive organization of His human frame. Besides this, He suffered interior anguish beyond our powers of conception; and ignominy, shame, and insult to the last degree. Probably few persons are able to dwell long at a time, at least under ordinary spiritual conditions, upon the actual depths of shame and anguish to which our most dear and holy Lord descended in those final hours of woe. We speak of the spitting, the stripping, the scourging, the blows of the rough fist upon that innocent head and face, the taunts, the gibes, the sneers, the vile and awful lies; but what words can convey the sickening and outrageous horror of the whole terrible trial? The immaculate Mother of God could stand to behold it. We sinners must kneel with Magdalen at the foot of the awful tree.

There we learn lessons which nowhere else would come so forcibly to us, — lessons of heartfelt contrition, patient endurance, forgiveness of enemies, bearing of wrongs; and there we learn, especially, to-day's lesson of charity, for, “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Generally speaking, there is no sin so hard to excuse as the wrong which touches ourselves. A lie told against us, an insult offered to us, makes us far more indignant than a

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far greater sin that does not concern us. Let us look at our Lord and Master hanging over us in the darkness of Good Friday on that tree of unutterable shame. Hooted at, the by-word and jest of the brutal soldiery and jeering multitude, Thy sacred character dragged in the dust, and Thy holiest name blasphemed, what is Thy answer, O Lord of the universe ! to Thy slanderers and slayers? "Father ! forgive them, for they know not what they do."

In this Lent, now opening before us, may God grant us the grace of silence and recollection, of meditation and prayer, that we may learn the manifold lessons of the cross !

DARK DAYS

ASH WEDNESDAY

OUR thoughts very naturally dwell, during the season of Lent, upon struggle, temptations, trials, and crosses ; yet there is another phase of the Lenten season which it is exceedingly necessary to keep before our minds. Like a golden thread we find it in the penitential offices. "Thy Father Who seeth in secret will repay thee," is the promise of Ash Wednesday's gospel ; and the hopeful words go on, brightening the page, as the stars shine in the midnight sky. "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." "He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil." And so we come to the first Sunday in Lent, and learn through the epistle that it is possible for the true Christian to die, and behold he lives ; to be chastised, and not killed ; to be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; to be needy, yet enriching many ; having nothing, yet possessing all things. And the gospel which tells us the awe-inspiring story of the meeting

face to face of the Most Holy, the King of kings and Lord of lords, with the prince of darkness and of hell, ends with the words, too often perhaps lost sight of in the gloomier part of the narrative: "Then the devil left Him; and behold angels came and ministered to Him."

In our day the necessity is really extreme of keeping the minds of Christians filled and permeated with an abiding sense of the love and care of Almighty God for each individual soul. The ceaseless hurry and worry prevalent amongst us, to become rich, to be counted intellectual, to know or to have as much as our neighbor, tends to destroy that overruling sense of spiritual things which would give ballast and leisure to our souls. Then, when earthly props fail us, and loneliness, sickness, or great trouble of any kind confronts us, the utter shallowness of our ordinary pursuits opens out in its desert waste before us, and our aching eyes see nothing to fill the void. The ambition dies out of life. If we have means, people begin to talk of change of scene and climate for tired souls who know but too well that they cannot run away from the terrible burden, *self*; though their constant craving is, nevertheless, to escape somehow from their "waste life and unavailing days." The unfortunate, introspective and emotional reading of our era fosters the depression, and suicide has become a horribly common thing.

Even a Christian mind becomes tainted with this prevailing evil of despondency, which needs to be most forcibly and promptly met. Two weapons are at hand, — the old and never to be discarded ones of the love of God and the love of our neighbor.

"*Behold angels came and ministered to Him.*" Did you ever stop to think of the joy those heavenly spirits must have felt when it was their enviable lot to be selected to bring comfort to their God? How did they minister

to Him? Have any of us thoughts holy or spiritual or divinely loving enough to dream in what guise they came, what words they said, what things they did, to comfort — Him?

Yet a similar privilege is ours. It is related that a certain religious, prostrate at the feet of a sick man, cried out : “I adore Jesus Christ in this suffering body ; my faith shows Him to me in a manner less real but more sensible than in the consecrated Host. I see Him present, not only as a physician is with his patient, a father with his son, a friend with his friend, but as the soul is with the body, the head with its members.”

If this is true — and what Christian dare gainsay it? — why should not the grace vouchsafed to these ministering angels be often ours? When our dark days come, let us rouse ourselves to carry comfort to another sufferer, and so to wait upon Jesus Christ. If nothing more, let us do as an old rule for nuns prescribed : “At some time in the day or night, think upon and call to mind all who are sick and sorrowful, who suffer affliction and poverty ; recollect the pain which prisoners endure, who lie heavily fettered with iron ; compassionate those who are under strong temptations ; take thought of all men’s sorrows, and sigh to our Lord that He may take care of them, and have compassion, and look upon them with a gracious eye.”

Oh, if in our dark, dark days we could only forget ourselves ! God, Who knows our trials, knows well how almost impossible to us that forgetfulness sometimes seems ; perhaps He ordains that it literally is impossible for a while, and that it shall be our hardest cross just then. But at least, as much as we can, let us forget ourselves in Him and in our suffering brothers ; and He will remember us. The same sweet, simple, old semi-Saxon rule said to the nuns for their comfort in spiritual distress : “Our Lord,

when He suffereth us to be tempted, playeth with us as the mother with her young darling ; she flies from him, and hides herself, and lets him sit alone, and look anxiously around, and call ' Dame ! dame ! ' and weep awhile ; and then she leapeth forth laughing, with outspread arms, and embraceth him and kisseth him and wipeth his eyes. In like manner our Lord sometimes leaveth us alone ; and yet, at that very time, our dear Father loveth us never the less, but doeth it for the great love He hath for us."

Let us fasten our gaze upon that memorable conflict in the wilderness, and then look forward, earnestly and long, to the agony in the garden and the torture of the cross. Do you think the Man-God knows nothing of your pain? Ah, dark as our days are, and only too real and reasonable as the depression, the spiritual anguish, the mind-distress may be, His was more ; for His was yours, and mine, and that of all the human race, concentrated in one tremendous weight, at one supreme moment, on His shrinking human soul.

Look long on Him. Then recall the words of a great saint to a sufferer : " You tell me that you cannot serve God on the bed of torture ; and I say to you, when was it that our Lord rendered the greatest service to His Father? Doubtless when He was stretched on the tree of the cross with pierced hands and feet. *That was His greatest act of service.*"

Nevertheless, we will go one point further still. You reply that you cannot even think, you scarcely hope, for you cannot remember to think of these things or of any hope at all ; memory itself seems dead. This may be true, and it is torture beyond torture, words failing to express its depth. Yet Christ bore that, even that, first, and for you. Try, at such times, to do nothing in haste, nothing in desperation. Be patient. Suffer and wait. It is *of faith* that no matter how long the trial, even lifelong ; nor how deep the

darkness, a darkness that may be felt ; yet, one day, — when the conflict will cease, and angels will minister to you, and God will crown His servant, — you will perceive and know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the eternal glory, that awaits those who in their deepest misery dare still to trust God's everlasting love.

THE SUNDAY OF GOOD COURAGE

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

NO brush of artist, no pen of poet, however world-renowned, could fitly delineate for us the memorable scene of the temptation in the wilderness, portrayed with such intense simplicity in the gospel for the first Sunday in Lent. Yet let us try to fancy a wide, lonely sweep of dark ground against a gloomy sky, and a darker, far gloomier figure rising suddenly, — who can say when or whence? — and confronting Him Who, led by the Spirit forty days ago into the wilderness, has fasted all that time, and is hungry now.

We think with awe of those two marvellously contrasting faces, remembering that one has been that of an angel, but is now that of a hideous demon, fallen vilely and hopelessly, lower than plummet or thought can reach ; and the other, while it bears the lineaments of a man, wan with fasting and pallid with prayer, is the face of Almighty God. Myriads of ages have gone by since Lucifer stumbled, as they tell us, over the shadow of that Man-God in Heaven, and, because he would not adore Him, fell forever from his high estate. He has met that Man-God face to face to-day.

When we have made this extraordinary scene real to us in imagination, what will perhaps strike us more forcibly, by contrast, is the grave calmness with which the Gospel

tells the story. One by one are the temptations offered; the three-fold bait of the world, the flesh, and the devil — old as Eden-days of Eve and Adam — is spread before this second Adam, all in vain. Then, when our Divine Lord has met and baffled each art of His foul adversary, the devil leaves Him, and behold angels come and minister to Him.

We have entered now into the Lenten wilderness, to join, in spirit at least, with our Redeemer in His fast of forty days. Some form of prayer, some kind of penance, we have chosen, or have had appointed us. Let us be careful, also, to choose some special fault to overcome. For in these forty days we too must meet the tempter. Let us do it practically and bravely. This Sunday has, perhaps, looked to us sometimes like a sad Sunday. Our Lord's hard fast, the hideous demon, the sharp temptations, cast a gloom about it. But it has another aspect. It is a day of courage, of hope, of victory, and of divine compassion.

We must all meet the tempter, and the combat is often a sharp one, before which flesh and spirit quail. What will fire our courage more speedily, rousing us to do and dare anything, than the thought that our Captain fought the fight before us? What soldier is going to shirk the battle, if his king is ahead in the fray? We are soldiers by the very fact of our Baptism; and there is a chivalrous cry that thrills our hearts in lines written in honor of our great Captain, Who will wear the scars of His victorious fight forever: —

“Not leader to me, but Captain, Thou!

In that word Thou hast called me, and bid me rejoice.

I can see the blood on Thy calm brave brow,

Hear the firm low notes of Thy soldier voice.

When the smoke drifts dark, and death is in air,

And the whiz of the cartridge-hail is shrill,

One word, my Captain! I follow Thee there,

With teeth hard set, with a soldier's will.

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“ When a brother drops down, shot dead at my side,
When the scorn of the foe rings fierce and loud ;
When a sense of defeat spreads sudden and wide,
And the heart of the raw recruit is cowed ;
One flash of Thine eye, my Captain ! then,
One thrilling touch of Thy wounded hand,
One swift brave word to Thy faltering men
To close up the ranks ! They ’ll understand.”

Ah, that sense of loyalty to Jesus Christ, that soldierly devotion, which rejoices to suffer what He suffered, to choose what He chose, and to fight where He fought first ! In one light, we shrink from temptation. We know that we ourselves are weak as water ; and the longer we practise humility, the more deliberate and clear becomes our humiliating conviction that every one of the sins we fear and despise the most, any one of us would be capable of committing, except for the grace of God. But — we have that grace.

In the gospel for this Sunday there are certain words which the mind finds itself going back to and dwelling upon with strange persistency ; words that now fix themselves in the heart, and echo there like a strain of heavenly harmony and of wondrous consolation, and again stir us like a bugle for the fight with sin : —

“ Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil.”

Led by the Spirit — led by the Spirit. What matter, then, how long or how sharp the battle, how fearful the temptation, how terrible the suffering, we shall never go astray, if He leads us, for He cannot lead us wrong. The one thing to fear, — except sin, worst of all evils, — the one thing to fear is cowardly discouragement. Of ourselves, we can do absolutely nothing ; of ourselves, we shall fail and fall. With Him leading us, with all our trust centred in Him, the end is victory, absolute and sure.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE TONGUE 75

Commentators differ on the meaning of this passage of Holy Scripture ; but, in the light by which we are considering it, as regarding God's servants fighting against His enemies, we may take it thus. So we set our faces manfully toward the battle, on this Sunday of good courage, of fair hope, and of holy victory.

Thou hast gone before us into the fight, O Jesus ! and though Thou art a warrior, Thou art tenderer than a mother in Thine infinite compassion, Thou Who hast been tempted like to us. We shall come to the hard-won victory with scars far different from Thy sacred wounds, for our scars will tell of many a dire defeat ; yet we shall come out more than conquerors by the Spirit's power. However sharp and long the fight be here, an endless day will break at last, when they shall

“ smile at perils gone,
Who set the victor garland on.”

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE TONGUE

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

THE gospel for the second Sunday in Lent tells the story of our Blessed Lord's transfiguration, — that glimpse into the glory belonging of right to the human nature because linked by Hypostatic Union to the divine nature. Peter and James and John were permitted to gaze upon it in awe and rapture ; but, when the glory had faded from their sight, a command was laid upon them by their Master, which contains a very valuable lesson in mortification for our Lenten practice. We read that “ as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying : ‘ Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead.’ ”

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When one has begun to taste the good which comes through mortification, one seizes upon opportunities to learn the lesson more thoroughly, in the hope that it may at length master the entire being. For penance, like suffering, is a treasure-house of blessing, if rightly used ; that is, in humble dependence on God's grace, and subject to obedience, which is the great penance of the will.

Let us consider to-day the mortification of the tongue.

We may not choose to imitate St. Veronica Giuliani, who, when her tongue had offended, opened a window, laid the offending member on the sill, and shut the window down upon it ; though probably most of us deserve such penance more than she did ! Another saint has told us, however, that silence and action collect the thoughts and strengthen the spirit ; and until we turn our attention and practice to this, we shall have little idea of the wonderful strength and help that lie hidden in silence. How, too, can we hear God speak, if we are always talking ? Do we often read of loquacious saints ?

Let us learn, then, as a wise guide of souls advises, to love, practise, and relish silence assiduously ; to know how to impose it upon ourselves, especially when the fever of speaking seizes us ; and to let our very words, by the humble, mild, reserved way in which we utter them, make all know that habitually and by choice we love and practise it.

To come, however, to very plain suggestions that have been made, we can close our lips when vivacity would lead us to reply, and vanity to speak ; if there is something we want very much to see and to talk about, we can turn away our eyes occasionally, and say nothing. The wish to hear or tell news, or to know everything that is going on, is a constant source of mortification ; so also is a clever or an amusing word which might make us admired, and which we can check in order to conquer pride and gain humility.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE TONGUE 77

Suppose we are interrupted fifty times in a very serious occupation, fifty times let us hush our impatient tongues, check even an impatient frown or gesture, and listen with as much sweetness as though we were not busy. The tongue can be schooled to show no annoyance at a teasing fly or at unpleasant weather, till we come to feel like Mother Margaret Hallahan on dark, trying days: "It is very good weather, very good weather; though, doubtless, not God Almighty's best!" Père Lacordaire used sometimes to undergo a far more severe and humiliating penance than that of the tongue, if he even so much as felt an interior motion of impatience, to which he had given no expression by word or look.

But especially let us punish our tongue, if it says one word against our neighbor, tells an idle or evil tale about him, or utters any rash judgment or censorious speech. They who indulge in a habit of criticism play with edged tools; yet we live in an atmosphere of criticism, and certain Catholics have become so influenced by it, as to find fault openly with their spiritual pastors and with the hierarchy of the Church.

What do we know of our neighbor's motive, his hidden intention, that thing which, in the sight of God, makes many an action fair and holy, which we dare to blame? There is a brilliantly acute as well as a saintly saying, worthy to be set in letters of gold: "Never be scandalized or surprised at what you see or hear. If you lived among the angels, and gave heed to what was going on, many things would seem to you not to be good, because you do not understand them."

God pities our weakness; He knows, better than any one else can know, how often the sharp speech, the biting criticism, rise partly from an over-impetuous zeal for His honor, forgetful that the wrath of man worketh not the

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righteousness of God. And because He knows and pities, He will strengthen us to control and to conquer ourselves in this regard.

In this month of March, specially dedicated to St. Joseph, let us seek the intercession of that favored saint who held the Word of the Almighty Father in his arms, and shielded Him in his bosom, when that Eternal Word was silent in His sacred infancy. Let us pray God to make all Catholics faithful children to their priests and bishops, whole-hearted in their service, loyal in every word and work, reverently mindful that a priest stands face to face with God daily, in a spiritual realm where only the prayers of other men can reach. Ah, if we could see into souls as God's eye sees, many would stand transfigured before us in an amazing likeness to our Lord on Mount Thabor, and before them we should veil our eyes in silent awe !

LOVE OF HEAVENLY THINGS

ST. JOSEPH'S DAY

LET us look back, to-day, to those heavenly years when Jesus made the Holy House at Nazareth a fairer Paradise than ever Eden was in all its pristine innocence. Who then among men knew and loved Jesus best? We all make answer, it was His favored foster-father, St. Joseph, Mary's spouse. Those who meditate long upon the mysteries of the Holy Childhood are aware how St. Joseph's peaceful, aged face becomes visible to their spiritual sight ; how they gradually come to shelter themselves under the care of him who cared for Jesus and Mary ; and how they learn from him patience, poverty, purity, and a tranquil holiness. As they honor and love St. Joseph, they find that their hearts begin

to despise all earthly things, and become more and more filled with the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

We are told that the wish of Jesus is that these latter ages of the world should be marked by *tenderness*. We are to love Jesus Christ with a personal, specially tender love. One step towards this—a very long step too—is the practice of the hidden life, of which St. Joseph is so striking an example. We cannot expect to gain much tenderness of love for Jesus, while we love the world and live in the world's noise and glare, seeking after this world's things. The love of Jesus comes through a life hidden in God, as was theirs who loved Him first and best.

St. John Berchmans had peculiar devotion to St. Joseph, "not only because he was head of the Holy Family, and, as such, foster-father and guardian of the Incarnate Word, but, more especially, because he considered him the perfect model of a hidden life." What is this life?

If we are really living lives of prayer, we surely at times become conscious that there is a point of the soul where all things created disappear, and God alone is present. We are alone with Him. But it is a place of deep interior silence. The blissful knowledge of it may come to us, indeed, in the crowded street-car, on the noisy thoroughfare, at our daily avocations; as it may come before the Blessed Sacrament, or in our lonely room at night. But in the soul there will be silence; the voice of prayer will cease vocally; we shall, as St. Ambrose says, hear the Holy Ghost speak "without noise of words," and the Presence of God will be rather felt than heard. Of the soul in such states of devotion Père Crasset says: "Then all creatures disappear before it, like shadows before the sun. It sees only the beauty of its divine Spouse, Who dwells in the depth of its heart; it hears only His voice; and it enjoys naught but the sweetness of converse with Him and the

ineffable joy of His presence. It cannot understand that any one can love or seek aught but Him. It feels Him sometimes without seeing Him,—feels that He imprints Himself as a seal upon its heart, that His finger writes therein the law of love, which dissipates all its sadness and fears. . . . O my heart ! when wilt thou enter this mysterious silence ? When wilt thou be plunged in these sacred obscurities ? When wilt thou enter this kingdom of peace ?”

Almighty God, the Author of reason, is Himself most reasonable in all He does. He demands of His creatures nothing more than they can do ; and as St. John of the Cross teaches us, He makes nothing empty which He does not fill. When He leads a soul to deny itself for Him, and to renounce worldly pleasures and vanities and human ties for His sake, He surely offers instead an interior consolation, more or less sensible, which far more than compensates for all that we seem to lose. But we do not seek enough for the tenderness of love for Jesus, nor for the personal knowledge of and union with Him. I do believe that if we would pray more for peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, our Lord would grant it, — not for any mere human gratification, but *because He is worthy that we should love Him and rejoice in Him*, and because peace is a great aid and factor in the spiritual life.

St. Augustine has said that God wills that we should “ desire great things greatly.” Let us really long and hunger and thirst for this spiritual communion with Jesus in the cloister of our souls. No pressure of business, no shock of circumstance, no trial or temptation need dispel or cloud it, unless by the will of God, that we may be further purified and enlightened by an interior desolation. St. Jane Frances says that her holy director, the Bishop of Geneva, usually enjoyed great interior consolation, as was evident in his countenance. He drew good thoughts from all things,

turning them to the profit of his soul ; but he received these great lights particularly when he was preparing his sermons, which he generally did in his walks. Study, he told her, served him as meditation, and he usually left it much inflamed and enlightened. He always kept his heart united with God ; he used to say that our prayer in this life must be one of work and action. But his life, she says, was one continual prayer, though his duties were overwhelming ; “and I think,” she declares, “that in his later years he had attained such purity that he desired, he loved, he beheld only God in everything. It was evident that he was absorbed in Him, and that nothing in the world, as he said, could afford him happiness but God. He could truly say with St. Paul : ‘ I live, now not I ; but Christ liveth in me.’ ”

He was a great bishop, you tell me. Yes ; but, not long ago, an obscure seamstress in France, whose name is now held in benediction, cried out, “The love of the good God devours me,” and it was said of her that she had arrived at that perfect liberty of the children of God who can do and say unreservedly what they will, because the life of Jesus alone lives in them. Perfect love in them has cast out fear ; for God is love, and, being love, He is also joy, and He dwelleth at peace in them. May St. Joseph, patron of the hidden life, obtain for us a share in that work of God in souls !

LENTEN PRACTICES

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

LET us make to-day some practical reflections for the keeping of the holy season of Lent.

And first : self-examination and self-discipline.

“The Passion of our Lord and Saviour,” writes Bishop Hedley, “is intended, first of all, to unite our hearts to His

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in that sweet and easy worship which is founded upon compassion. It is intended to melt our hearts and to set our affections flowing." But he goes on to say: "Above all, the great and fundamental disposition of continual sorrow for sin is wonderfully promoted by the constant remembrance of the Passion. . . . How can my heart tolerate sin any longer when sin has bowed my Saviour's head in the Agony, sin has torn His flesh at the scourging, sin has pierced Him with the thorns, sin has nailed Him to the cross!"

Let us, this Lent, choose some special sin, some special fault, and try very earnestly with God's help to root it out. Suppose it is our custom to seek human sympathy in our troubles, to complain of our trials, to rebel against them. What a gain it will be to us to meditate humbly on the manner in which our Divine Master bore the heavy load of His cross, and to endeavor, all this Lent, to bear our crosses like Him.

Again to quote Bishop Hedley's helpful words: "My Lord and my Master! (we may say to Him) Thou didst suffer, — and suffer far more than this. To Thee suffering was familiar; Thou didst choose it for Thy lot and Thy inheritance — and I, I dread it and refuse it! By Thy loving acceptance of pain, give me the courage to accept all that I have to suffer! By Thy meekness, extinguish the natural disturbance of my breast against those who injure me! By Thy lifting up of Thy Heart, teach me how to make use of physical pain! By Thy silence, help me to repress murmurs and complainings! By Thy ardent love of Thy Heavenly Father, enable me to understand how affliction may intensify my love of God!"

He declares that acts like these, made perhaps with the crucifix in our hands, will calm the resistance and outcry of nature, and will diffuse a holy peace and a brave resignation

throughout our faculties, as if Jesus Himself vouchsafed to lay His own holy hand of healing upon us.

If we will but try this method, practically and faithfully, throughout Lent, God alone knows what a growth in grace will be ours by Easter. When the longing for human sympathy comes to us, let us resolutely lift up our crucifix, look at the Five Wounds, count them, and speak to the Sacred Heart as to a friend nearer and dearer than any other. Each night let us reckon up our victories and number our defeats, and then come to our dear Lord with our offering, begging Him to pardon our failures, and to bless the efforts we have made for love of Him. It may be that, before Lent is over, there will be granted to us, as our great reward, a strong grasp upon the truth that suffering rightly borne is like a sacrament; that it draws us into a strengthening and blessed union with Him Who drank the cup of suffering to its dregs; and then we shall be able to cry out, whether on Thabor or on Calvary: "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

Yes, it is good to be here, although in loneliness, in bodily pain, in spiritual trial; it is good, because Thou art here, my Jesus! and where Thou art is peace, though that peace be often hidden from sight in the dead weight of our cross.

In the Manual of Prayer compiled by order of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, there is a collection of very beautiful and helpful ejaculations for the use of persons in any trouble of mind or body. The frequent repetition of such words, or of those above quoted, is calculated to soften and soothe the heart, and to render it pliable to the action of divine grace. How beneficial to our souls would it be if, during this holy season, we would stop the greater part of our newspaper and other ordinary reading, and would store our minds first with some of these lovely sentences,

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and then with a daily systematic course of spiritual reading. Let us not allow this season to pass without reading thoroughly and carefully — and prayerfully — one book of solid worth. Father Faber's "At the Foot of the Cross," Father Luis de la Palma's work upon the Passion of our Lord, translated from the Spanish in the admirable *Quarterly Series*, St. Bonaventure's or Père Fouard's or Father Elliott's "Life of Christ," Bishop Hedley's notes of "Retreat" from which we have been quoting, Bishop Ullathorne's wonderful volume on "Christian Patience," the world-renowned "Following of Christ," the New Testament, and especially its divine chapters on the sufferings of our Lord, — here are a few of the treasures which our holy Mother the Church has provided for the spiritual culture of her children. For those who have the leisure, what an admirable season is this to read more than one book ; to steep the mind as well as the heart in the Church's lore ; to study the lives of the saints, and to learn with shame how far our lives are from their lives in the humble following of the same Master, although we are born to God in the same Baptism, and are nourished by the same Sacramental Food as they were.

The same Sacramental Food ! Ah ! in this Lent let us resolve, God willing, to feed upon It more frequently, to visit our divine Lord more often and more systematically, to console His Sacred Heart in its loneliness and its craving for our love. We who cannot fast, let us hear Mass each morning ; or let us say our beads in His Sacramental Presence ; or make the Way of the Cross devoutly, treading in His steps. Added to all else, we should consider the enormous treasure of indulgences we may gain in making the Stations. If only we say before each Station once : "Jesus meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto thine," and then say ten times : "My Jesus, mercy !" we gain fourteen times one thousand days' indulgence, and

we can offer it for the dead. And as, Station by Station, we gaze upon our Jesus suffering, must we not come nearer to Him? Are we not learning to endure suffering with Him?

O Jesus! guide us, each day through this Lent, closer and closer to Thy Heart; fill us with Thy Spirit; make us like to Thee! Mary, dear Mother of Sorrows! teach us to stand with thee beside the cross; or, rather, to kneel with the penitent, forgiven Magdalen, at its foot, and

“There let the blood from out that side
Fall gently on us, drop by drop.
Jesus, our Love, is crucified.”

UNLIMITED LOYALTY

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

MARCH twenty-fifth is the feast of the Annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel revealed to the holiest of virgins that she had been chosen to be the Mother of the Son of the Most High God. As the wild March winds sweep round our dwellings, we think in restful meditation of the holy time, nineteen centuries ago, when “the tingling silent-ness of the quiet midnight filled the little room at Nazareth that night in March, and the unconscious stars drifted across the sky, and the lily was closed and sleeping in its vase, and the watch-dogs of the herdsmen of Nazareth broke ever and anon the stillness of the night, while the awful mystery was being accomplished. Morning rose on the earth, cold, clear, and vernal; and the long-expected Redeemer of mankind had come, and no one but the Mother knew.”

We may join our voices in her praise; we may think deep things of her unutterable dignity; but can we ever

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fathom the depths of that Immaculate Heart, or so much as dream what life was to her from that hour?

Had it been our blessed lot to see her, doubtless one of our chief impressions would have been how little she cared for worldly things ; a perfect pattern of those whose life is hid with Christ in God, a vision unveiled to mortal eyes, even here, of those virgin souls above, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. We cannot think of her as annoyed by the trifles that vex us, or fancy her as craving for earthly pleasures, or laughing and talking loudly, or turning her mind deliberately from the thought of God. Let us try to image to ourselves all that is most delicately refined, yet never fastidious ; the truest consideration for the feelings of others, yet an utter incapacity for enjoying anything in the least coarse or indelicate ; the highest sanctity, of which the highest good breeding is merely typical ; our image falls below the mark. We are not capable of imagining the immaculate beauty of the King's daughter, unequalled and alone.

Men say, God allows us to enjoy the good things of this world. In a certain sense, we may not deny it. It is theologically true that the Blessed Virgin was perfectly free to refuse the high dignity offered her. It lay in her free-will to choose what was less pleasing to God, and she exercised her free-will, and chose what was the highest. It lies in the free-will of many of us to-day to choose an easy life, easy ways, pleasures, money, rather than a harder path.

Once, it is said, St. Peter left Rome under the threat of martyrdom, and turned his face elsewhere. We dare not blame him. Many a man in those days sought refuge in the desert, and worked there grandly for the Church. Yet, in his case, we know he turned again, and retraced his steps ; for, on his way, he had come face to face with that beloved Lord Who once looked on him in the high-priest's hall.

On His shoulder lay the heavy cross once more, and from His lips, dearer than life to Peter, came the words : —

“ My son ! I go to Rome thorn-crowned,
There to be crucified anew,
Since he to whom I gave My sheep,
Leaves them to other men to keep.”

Our answer is ready : We are not St. Peter ; far less are we like the Virgin Mother. Yet, as I write, I think of one among us, who went out bravely from his own people a while ago, and then from one holy state he climbed upward to another ; and how it was said of him, by a friend who knew him well from his earliest childhood : “ Ah ! he was always seeking for the highest.” I think, too, how the third Lenten Sunday’s gospel ends, in words fraught with wonder and with consolation, — Christ’s answer to the woman’s admiring cry of blessing on her who gave Him birth : “ Blessed are they,” He said, “ who hear the word of God, and keep it.” And again, of those words more wonderful and consoling still : “ Whosoever shall do the will of God, he is My brother, and My sister, and mother.”

“ Only let us do His will,” so writes another who left all for His sake, “ only let us do His will, and we are all of us Marys, and angels will hail us, and Christ will be born of us, and though His cross may cause us seven and seven times seven sorrows, yet at the last He will assume us into heaven, and crown us there, doing to us in our measure what He has done to Mary in her measure ; and if this be true, who would not earnestly strive to have a special devotion to the sweet, adorable will of God ? ”

To-day His angel stands before some of us, giving us our choice, — something we may freely do or not do, only one of the ways is highest, and holiest, and most pleasing to our Lord, — a vocation, perhaps, to leave all things, and

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follow Him, in poverty, chastity, and obedience all our days.

What shall we say? I know not what we might say at other times. But *now*, when He chose our life and humbled Himself; when He chose death, and a shameful death; when He, the Lord of all things, pleased not Himself; what shall we choose now, this Lent?

God help us to choose as He chose; to forget self in Him, to lose self in Him, to deny ourselves wholly for the sake of the souls He died to save; and to answer as His Mother answered: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word."

JOY

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT — LÆTARE SUNDAY

A CERTAIN very learned man went forth, one day, away from his deep and lifelong study of theology, feeling that he had not attained the trust in God which he desired to have, and seeking some one who might tell him how to gain it. At length, near a church door, he found a poverty-stricken beggar full of sores, and said to him: "Good day, brother."

"Sir, I never had a bad one," was the answer.

He tried again. "May God send you better fortune."

"My fortune has been always good," the beggar said.

"How can this be?" asked the wise man. "You are covered with wounds and diseases."

"I am," the beggar responded, "but it is the goodness of God that sends them; and when the sun shines, I rejoice in the sun, and when it is stormy, I rejoice in the storm; it is God that sent it."

"Who are you?" asked the theologian.

He made answer : " I am a king."

" Where is your kingdom? "

" Over my own soul, and over my own will, and there is no rebellion in it."

" How did you find this? "

" I looked for it in prayer and meditation until I found it."

" And when did you find it? "

" I found it when I became detached from creatures."

Mid-Lent Sunday is known as *Lætare Sunday*, because, on the fourth Sunday of the penitential Lenten season, as on the third Sunday of the solemn season of Advent, our Mother the Church suddenly bids her children to rejoice.

" Rejoice, O Jerusalem," she cries to-day, " and come together, all ye that love her ; rejoice with joy, ye that have been in sorrow." And in Advent: " Rejoice in the Lord always ; again I say, rejoice."

Joy is the life of the Church, for God is essentially joy. We say truly that Christ lived in suffering, and died in unutterable anguish ; that we have our Ash Wednesdays and Good Fridays ; that earth's kinds of trouble and distress are manifold ; and that there are also the pains of Purgatory and the far more awful pains of Hell. But still, in the midst of our Advents, when our thoughts are on the dread judgment, and of our Lents, when we are following Christ to Calvary, the Church, who knows the mind of God, cries out : " Rejoice ! "

Can you or I, however great our sin, alter God's essential, unalterable peace? Can the creature trouble in aught the infinite calm of the Creator? We sometimes taste a little of His untroubled joy. On Ash Wednesday, with the touch of the ashes and the reminder of death, we may think, exultingly : " I shall rise again ! God omnipotent will gather our formless dust from the four winds and the deep-

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est seas. He shall call me, and I will answer Him. In my flesh I shall see my God." Or at the Forty Hours' Devotion we may kneel before the Blessed Sacrament uplifted, that our homage may repair the outrages of ungrateful men ; and we may almost forget that intention in our jubilant remembrance of St. Thomas' comforting assurance : "They cannot harm our Lord's glorified Body." Our Lord was happy here on earth, though the vision of sinners and sin lay ever before Him ; and it has been truly said that if the sins of others can make the sinless grieve, yet those sins can never interfere with that abiding gladness, deep down, which union with God must of necessity produce.

In what does the glory of the Forty Hours' Devotion consist? Is it not, largely, in what makes the foretold joy of Heaven? Before us is the altar, decked with flowers and ablaze with lights. High over all, what do we see but Jesus, God incarnate, our Sacramental God? Where are we? With Thee, O God, in Whose presence, the Psalmist tells us, is fulness of joy, and at Whose right hand there are delights forevermore.

Do we know if this be earth or Heaven? This, at least, we know, that the joy of God's Presence here on earth has been so intensely felt by some of our fellow-men that their cry has been in their overwhelming transports : "It is too much, Lord ! it is too much ; stay Thy hand, spare me ; if not, I must die " ; that a St. Catherine of Siena believed literally that God made man, and redeemed him, *because He loved him*, and it made her life a long ecstasy ; and that St. Felix of Cantalice could sing to the Blessed Sacrament :

" Who tasteth Thee hath no desires,
Nothing needeth earth can give."

Is such happiness worth having? and if so, why not follow the saints' methods of gaining it? This is certain,

that God will fill a soul that empties itself of earth's joys and plans, in order to give Him room. When we have blinded our eyes to the world's vain delights, and closed our ears to earth's syren voices, we shall hear the Church cry out : " Rejoice ! " and we shall respond in the words she puts on our lips in her Mass to-day : " I was glad at the things that were said unto me : We will go into the house of the Lord." Then shall we be on the sure road to say with the beggar : " I am a king — over my own soul, and over my own will, and there is no rebellion in it."

UNDER THE PURPLE

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT — PASSION SUNDAY

WHY did Christ suffer? Theology teaches that one drop of His most Precious Blood would have sufficed to save us ; why did He choose to shed it all? What means this mystery of intolerable shame, this extravagant piling of one horrible agony upon another, these myriad blows of the scourges, this coarse clamor of the vile, insulting multitude, this lifelong misunderstanding on the part of a people loved even to the death, this final desertion by the Father loved beyond them all?

On Passion Sunday we veil the crucifixes of our churches. At the very time when our thoughts are turning steadily to the crucifixion, the images of that crucifixion are shrouded from our gaze ; even the crosses above the Stations of the Way of the Cross are sometimes concealed by the solemn purple. Has the strange though lesser mystery any connection with the other more marvellous one?

It certainly has.

Men find it exceedingly hard to realize that the invisible is of more account than the visible ; that man's failure

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is God's success; and that One Whom we cannot see is Supreme Master of all things seen. Christ came to teach us these great truths. He loved men with a love beyond our power to think, but He loved God infinitely more. Out of this fact, that the men whom He loved had offended that Supreme Being, most holy and most majestic, came the solemn steadfastness of His purpose to repair the outraged majesty of God. Men saw Him in their midst, so like to them that they deemed Him a brother-man; that they looked on Him as a neighbor and fellow-laborer; that they ate and drank with Him, and called Him the carpenter's son. Yet, as He moved among them, holy and harmless and undefiled, they wearied of Him. He was with them, but not of them; they grew tired of hearing Him called good, Whose true name, before which Angels bow, is God.

So they rose madly, and slew Him, and He lay hid in the shadow and shame of death. He, Who came to redeem man and to triumph over hell, became man's captive and hell's victim. To all human appearance, when it was three in the afternoon of the first Good Friday, the work of Christ had failed. Deserted by His few followers; betrayed by one of His chosen Apostles; spit upon, insulted, tortured, dead; — so the God-Man ended His work. And, at that moment, the triumph of the invisible God was won.

The lessons to be gathered from all this are deep and many. God help us to-day to gain courage and strength from two of them!

There are some souls, wholly devoted to their Maker, who are possessed by an intense gift of realizing the unseen. What God has said is more vital and clear to them than the loving words of their mother in their childhood, or the sweetest flatteries that human lips can utter. They go gladly into the darkness, in an absorbing fascination for

that hidden Deity, Who has won them to Him by the cords of an infinite love.

Of such souls St. Bonaventure wrote : " It is necessary that all intellectual operations be abandoned, and that the whole force of the affections be transferred and transformed into God. . . . But if you ask how these things may be done, question grace, not doctrine ; the desire, not the intellect ; the groaning of prayer, not the study of books ; the spouse, not the teacher ; God, and not man. Let us die, therefore, and let us go forth into the darkness ; let us impose silence upon cares, wishes, and vain fancies ; with Christ crucified, let us pass out of this world to the Father."

Such men understand these things so clearly that they cannot comprehend how other men are blind ; how other men can care for things that are seen, things that can cheat and fade and die, when the Divine and Immortal is so near. A musician rapt in his music, a sculptor in his art, a poet in his fairest dreams, are only types of these divinely enamoured souls. Men talk of mystics. There are more mystics in the Church to-day than many of us imagine. Other men misjudge them, and often God hides His face ; humiliations come fast, and fall heavily ; for these souls must be tried, as gold in the fire, till all dross is burned away. They are called fools and mad, as their Master was ; and it is said sharply that they should be content to live like other people, an ordinary easy life.

Oh ! let us think, instead, whether God is not bidding us, in these two weeks, to shape our ordinary easy lives more like the mystics ; not to heed visible things so much, but to live apart from them ; to shut our eyes, and still more firmly shut our ears, and think then *what lies hid under the purple*.

When we see the crucifix, we do not always feel its meaning. In the shadow and the darkness of these fourteen

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days, let us draw very close to the Sacred Heart, and let us take the time from other things to do it. This we know, that, hidden beneath that purple, is all that really makes life worth living; the veiled Beauty that ravishes angels and saints in heaven, and makes earth heaven to those who consent to sacrifice to Him all that they love the best.

And if the shadows fall very darkly, if the sacrifices seem too great, the burdens too heavy, the lifelong labor almost unending, and we crave for rest; if men, even good men, misunderstand and blame our best intentions, proving to us how true the saying that "the crosses the good make for the good are the hardest to bear"; remember, Christ calls us then to live closer than ever to Him, away from human love and sympathy, *under the purple*. Only a little while at the longest, here, shrouded in darkness! Such souls shall stand at the last, tried and found faithful, face to face with their God forever, clad in the royal purple of the conquering kings.

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE PASSION

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT — PALM SUNDAY

FOR centuries upon centuries, as Holy Week returns, the Church has flung herself at the foot of the crucifix, and told anew the story, never to be wholly told, of an infinite love ransoming finite man. Naturally and fittingly our minds dwell on the suffering and the sorrow; yet, as the years go by, we begin to feel that deeper in the Church's mind than the anguish of her God and the crime of men, is the thought of her God's glory and of man's redemption.

Holy Thursday is full of an unearthly beauty and delight ; and Holy Saturday seems sometimes the brightest day in all the year, its lamps ablaze with the new light, its fonts sparkling with the Easter water, its bells chiming afresh with the organ's joyful strains, and the glad Alleluias come back to us once more.

The French scholar and Christian, Frederick Ozanam, once said that if God has, as of course He has, some mysteries yet unrevealed to us, no doubt they are secrets of mercy ; and when we look very deeply into the awful tragedy of Good Friday, a solemn joy takes possession of our souls ; in no figurative sense we *glory* in the cross of our Lord. For, if we read the office for Holy Week with this thought of triumph and joy uppermost, we shall be struck with the frequent occurrence of a key far other than the minor in the great chant of the Missal. It flashes upon us that, hidden behind the dark curtain of the shame and pain, a King has gone forth to the battle, riding the strange white steed of the Apocalyptic vision ; the name of the King, Faithful and True, is the Word of God, and His eyes are as a flame of fire, and on His garment and on His thigh is written : King of kings, and Lord of lords. And, through and above the yells of the murderous multitude, rises the voice of a far greater multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders : " Alleluia ! for the Lord our God the Omnipotent hath reigned ! "

We follow the bleeding feet along the dolorous way, and behold ! on a sudden we understand that this bent, sorrow-laden figure is One coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, a beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength. And then, turning our eyes to the cross lifted high between two worlds, itself the centre of the universe, and gazing on that white form, before whose blood-stained beauty all other beauty dies, faith sud-

denly beholds the Lord upon a throne high and elevated, and hears the Seraphim crying one to another and saying : " Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of hosts ! all the earth is full of His glory."

We are looking upon the mystery of God's love for man. Do you know what such love is ? A mother's love is only a shadow of it ; a bridegroom's, only a type. Hear what He said Himself to St. Catherine of Genoa : " Ah, if you knew how I love a soul ! But this will be the last thing you will know in this world, for to apprehend it would kill you."

Truly has it been said that the love of God for man brings the Christian soul to the brink of a veritable abyss, whose depths none have sounded save the soul of Jesus, and after Him the soul of His most holy Mother ; and that, nevertheless, whoever has not come at least to the edge of this gulf, knows neither the gift of God nor God Himself. " The Infinite Beauty has for each man a spousal love. Nothing can, like this, clearly reveal to us the absolute power of love : for it seems to result that, even in God, love is dominant over all."¹

When we think of this, it almost stops our breathing. What marvel that there is magnificence in the Passion, when there is such magnificence in God's love ! Is it possible for man to meet it with anything like itself ? Let us see.

What was the darkest point in the Passion, the sharpest anguish, the stroke before which life gave way, and the great Heart broke ? We all know. It was in that mysterious and supreme moment when the Son cried out that He was forsaken by the Father. Perhaps some of us know a little of what that anguish is like.

When the dark hour comes again, and God hides His

¹ Bishop Gay's " Christian Life and Virtues."

face from us, and all hope seems gone, let us, even while we remember how a Saint said, "If it were possible that only one soul should be damned, each of us ought to fear lest it should be his own," offset that fear with the same Saint's words when asked what he would do if an Angel should come, and tell him that his name was blotted from the Book of Life: "I would not do less, I would not do more; I would not confide the less in God, but I would try to confide more; for if Jesus has died for me, I think it impossible that He cannot save me."

Let us cry with St. Paul of the Cross: "O blessed God! Thou fleest from me, but I will follow after Thee; where Thou art, I will be; where Thou goest, I will go. Is it possible that I can be saved? And yet in the mercy of God I have confidence that even I shall be saved. . . . When you see imperfections and sins in yourselves, take them, and with an act of contrition cast them into the great furnace of the love of God; and as a thread is consumed in the fire, so all these things will be consumed in the love of Christ. For so, also, our God is a consuming fire."

With St. Gertrude let us hear the words heard by her in vision: "My child! there are many more saved than thou thinkest for. I condemn no one who does not willingly resist My grace."

Let us meet the magnificence of the Passion and Love of Christ with the magnificence of our trust. When He Himself cried out once in the anguish of a forsaken soul, what words came next but these: "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" And when we cry to Him—oh! let us cry it, even while we seem to sink lowest:—"Into Thy hands, O Lord! into Thy hands!" whether we hear it at once or no, a Divine Voice certainly replies: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the

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son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not
I forget thee."

THY WILL BE DONE

The sun is sinking fast,
The daylight dies ;
Let love awake, and pay
Its evening sacrifice.

As Christ upon the cross
His head inclined,
And to His Father's hands
His parting soul resigned,

So now herself my soul
Would wholly give,
Into His sacred charge
In Whom all spirits live ;

So now, beneath His eye,
Would calmly rest,
Without a wish or thought
Abiding in the breast,

Save that His will be done,
Whate'er betide ;
Dead to herself, and dead
In Him to all beside.

Thus would I live, yet now
Not I, but He,
In all His love and power,
Henceforth alive in me.

One Sacred Trinity,
One Lord divine !
May I be ever His,
And He forever mine !

CASWALL'S *Translations*.

THE ILLUMINATION OF THE INTELLECT

EASTER DAY

IN the clear radiance of Holy Saturday, our hearts exult at the flash of the new fire and the cool brightness of the Easter water ; and we join jubilantly in the glad refrain of prophecy, lesson, and prayer : " O God, Who enlightenest this most sacred night by the glory of the resurrection of the Lord ! O Lord God, never failing Light, Who art the Creator of all the lights ! bless this light : that we may be inflamed by that same light, and enlightened by the fire of Thy brightness, and obtain that light and life which will have no end."

Light, light ! It is the ever recurring theme of the Easter season. From the darkness of Lent, from the purgative way of penance and pain, we are entering upon the path of brightness, the illuminative way of mystical and ascetic theology, which will lead us to the great Pentecostal consummation, the unitive way, the divine marriage of the soul with its God Who is its Spouse.

In that wonderful fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, where the argument for the resurrection of the body sweeps on with relentless force, clause following upon clause as wave follows wave with the rising tide, St. Paul declares : " It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body. . . . As we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly." And in the epistle for Holy Saturday, the same great Apostle says : " If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. For you are dead ; and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Have we ever thoughtfully brought our minds to bear upon the wonderful events of this truly blessed night, in which heaven is united to earth, and God to man; this most sacred night, enlightened by the glory of the resurrection of the Lord? On this night He raised triumphant from the tomb His ever sinless body, that He had deigned to take, three and thirty years before, of an immaculate mortal Mother, in order that He, the impassible and immortal God, might be able to suffer and die for us sinful men. He raised it now from death, gifted with impassibility forever, never now to suffer or sorrow again; gifted with agility, — speeding through space with the speed our thoughts have; and with subtilty, — closed doors and gates of iron being no obstacle to it, as it passed unhindered through; and with immortality, like the angels in the eternity of God. He waits to share this glory with His faithful ones. The path to it is the path that He trod, — through shame and pain, purgation and humiliation, pressing onward to light, to illumination, and onward still to the entire union of the entire man with God. For we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.

More than six centuries ago, there studied in the famous theological schools of Cologne a silent, thoughtful youth, so silent, so grave, that the other students laughed at him, publicly ridiculed him, called him the great, dumb, Sicilian ox. Silently he bore it, his mind meanwhile intent on God, misunderstood by those around him, "his life fixed in another set of principles from theirs." With his fellow-students, argument, debate, discussion, counted for much; yet steadily, calmly, over his books and at the foot of his crucifix, undisturbed by the strife of tongues about him, the big dumb scholar thought and prayed.

At last a day came when his master bade him defend a difficult thesis before the assembled school, and in the

power of God he obeyed. His master was none other than that extraordinary man, Albertus Magnus, first theologian and first philosopher of his time, a giant in the intellectual order, and more highly gifted yet, we are told,¹ in the moral sublimity of his character, his simplicity, modesty, gentleness, piety, love for the Blessed Sacrament and for our Lady. Listening, when at last his silent pupil spoke, then starting subtle objections and keen arguments, and hearing him meet them with perfect and patient skill undaunted, Albertus Magnus cried out in admiration at last, and said : " We call this young man a dumb ox, but so loud will be his bellowing in doctrine that it will resound throughout the whole world."

Men know that silent scholar now as St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angel of the Schools, doctor of the Church's sacred science, ranking high above his extraordinary teacher in the economy of God's kingdom. Where did he find his wondrous wisdom? He found it, — far more than in books and conversation and argument, — in his life of the spirit, dead to the things of time and sense, hidden with Christ in God.

Never was he known, whatever the provocation, to lose his perfect mastery over self ; never did the storm of passion mar the whiteness of his stainless soul. As a child, the awful thought, *what God might be*, had filled his mind ; as a youth, he had set holy purity above every enticement the world or the senses could offer ; he had placed his joy in prayer, silence, and contemplation ; and, in his deep humility, " his only terror was the fear of being made something of." Risen with Christ, hidden in God with Him, he had set his affections on things above, not on things of this world ; and the reward promised the clean of heart was granted him. " A crystal clearness of intellect, undisturbed by any

¹ Vaughan's " Life of St. Thomas Aquinas."

prejudice or passion ; a vision into the unseen world, which became like the habit of a life," — such was the prize Thomas of Aquin won.

This Easter, let us ask of our Risen Lord an Easter gift, — illumination of the intellect, kindling of the love, enlightenment of the will. Ask of Him the gift of Piety, that precious gift of the Holy Ghost. For to be pious means really to be possessed with the love of God, Who is Himself the All-true, the All-wise, the All-sufficient, the infinitely Fair, above all that can be named and known. Cry with St. Augustine : *O amare ! O ire ! O sibi perire ! O ad Deum pervenire !* Oh, to love ! oh, to go ! oh, to die to self ! oh, to pass through all things else and come to God !

RISEN WITH CHRIST

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE forty days of Lent are ended, the great forty days of Easter are begun. All round the jubilant earth the glad strain is ringing : "Christ is risen ! He is risen indeed !" The whole world is rejoicing, because One has gone down into the gloomy realm of death, and has returned again, alive forevermore ; He has gone down into the darkness, and has come back into the light ; and the word upon His blessed lips is "Peace !"

Is there any gift of God more to be desired than this ? With a heart in peace, at rest in Him, what cross cannot be borne, what trial is too great ?

The illustrious Benedictine, Dom Guéranger, in his work on the liturgical year, tells us that the practice for this holy season mainly consists in the spiritual joy which it should produce in every soul that is risen with Jesus. "This joy

is a foretaste of eternal happiness, and the Christian ought to consider it a duty to keep it up within him, by ardently seeking after that life which is in our Divine Head, and by carefully shunning sin, which causes death. Our Holy Mother the Church is urgent now in bidding us rejoice. You who before Easter were sinners, but have now returned to the life of grace, see that you die no more. And you to whom the Paschal solemnity has brought growth in grace, show this increase of more abundant life by your principles and your conduct."

Yet there are sad hearts, lonely hearts, suffering hearts, who will ask how this joy can be; how anything will have power to stop the anguish which death, or separation, or some interior trial has brought.

It can only be by simple and entire abandonment of self into the hands of God; by an utter and childlike union with His holy will; something more than submission, something higher than resignation; a veritable oneness with our risen Lord. "*If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above.*"

Easter tide, Dom Guéranger says, belongs to what is called the Illuminative Life; and would to God we turned our thoughts and aims more ardently than we do, to those approved paths of the spiritual life, the Purgative Way, or the soul's Lent; the Illuminative, her bright Easter time; the Unitive, her Pentecostal season, when, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, she enters into thorough union with her God.

We dread the hard seasons of spiritual purgation, and the times of bereavement and trial which, borne rightly, do a similar work; but oh! we shall thank God for them one day. The pain may pierce very far, even to the extent graphically described by that keen analyzer of spiritual conditions, St. John of the Cross:—

"The soul derives now no help from the advice that may be given it, nor from its spiritual director, because of the loneliness and desolation that overwhelm it in this obscure night. For no remedy, no relief, is possible for that pain; this the more so, inasmuch as the soul lies powerless here, like a prisoner in a dark cell, bound hand and foot, unable to move or to see, and shut out from all help whatever; until our Lord shall have accomplished the purgation of the soul in His own way; until it shall have become humbled, softened, and purified; until it shall become one with God in that degree of the union of love which He, in His mercy, intends for it, and corresponding to which is the greater or less violence, the longer or shorter duration, of its purgation."

In God's own time the anguish will pass, the light of the illuminative way will dawn, and the soul will press onward to union with her Lord. In the hot crucible of trial, pride is burned away, and the soul learns to walk in lowliness and fear, and so gains true strength. When there is no longer any dependence on one's own powers, then comes the strength of God to give the soul a more than human energy to conquer every foe.

"I depart!" cried a demon, when expelled, at the prayer of a servant of God, from the sufferer whom he had possessed. "But, before I go, tell me, Father! who will be the sheep, and who the goats?" "I know not," was the answer. "I only know that I greatly fear that I shall be among the goats." "Ah!" howled the evil spirit, "it is this humility that drives me out."

Our Risen Saviour gives us grace to rise with Him. From our pain and misery, our spiritual darkness and distress, our torturing comprehension of our own nothingness and worse than nothingness, He lifts us into the light of His Presence, His all-sufficing merits, His abundant grace. And

then a time comes, — for “the longest day has its evening, the hardest work its ending, the sharpest pain its contented and everlasting rest,” — a time comes when sorrow and joy are alike welcome to the soul that is one with God in a perfect union with Him by the Holy Spirit’s power ; when it wishes nothing but what He wishes, loves only what He loves, lives by His life alone. Of such a soul it has been written that it melts into water at the word of God ; not the word which thunders, nor even the word which commands, but at the word of simple desire and of the least preference. St. Francis de Sales says that it dies. Happy and holy death ! “We say of the dead that they have passed away,” he writes. “Certainly our will cannot die, nor our mind either. But it sometimes passes beyond the limits of its ordinary life, in order to live entirely in the will of God. It is when it neither can nor desires to will, and thus abandons itself to the good pleasure of Divine Providence, so mingling with and steeping itself in that good pleasure that it no longer appears, but is entirely hidden with Christ in God, in Whom it lives, yet not it, but the will of God in it.”

Such is the resurrection that can take place this side the grave ; and such the path that leads to true Easter joy and peace.

THE EIGHTH SACRAMENT

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

EASTER Day and Low Sunday have come and gone, and this is the second Sunday after Easter, “the Sunday of the Good Shepherd.” Christ is risen indeed, and the joy-bells are ringing, and the Church and nature both are glad and gay ; but our holy Mother cannot long for-

get, as all true hearts cannot, that her best Beloved, her triumphant Spouse, once suffered and died for her.

"Dearly beloved!" she cries to her faithful children, "Christ suffered for us, leaving to you an example that ye should follow His steps." And then she goes on to remind us of His sinless earthly life, — how He endured pain and disgrace while living, — how He endured agony and shame when dying, — with what guilelessness, patience, pardon, and meekness, bearing our loathsome sins in His own body on the tree. By Peter's voice she bids us think of our Lord as the Shepherd of our souls; and then in the gospel she repeats the words even tenderer yet of Peter's Lord and Master: "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep."

Perhaps no better subject to-day could hold our thoughts than this: How shall we give our lives in return to this good Shepherd of our souls?

We have been engrossed of late with the beautiful offices of Holy Week, and have been fain to cry with Peter: — "Let us build here for ourselves tabernacles, and dwell in this dream of delight with our Lord forever!" The outside, everyday world of business, of study, of home cares, has seemed cold and bleak to us, compared with the divine loveliness of the sanctuary and the nearness of the Sacramental Presence of Jesus Christ. For many and many a devout soul, it is hard to take up ordinary life again; and there is a supernatural, a spiritual cause for this, which is very pleasing to Almighty God.

He Himself it is who grants to us this unearthly charm and fascinating beauty in the Catholic Church, unknown and not to be imagined by any outside her fold. He gives it, out of the abundance of His mercy, as a proof that it is indeed His own true Church; and He gives it also as a foretaste of the endless, undying happiness of heaven, so

that we may long to enter there. As St. Cyprian said : " We reckon paradise to be our home ; already we begin to have the patriarchs for our kinsmen. Why should we not make haste and run, to see our home and to greet our kinsfolk ? There are a great many of those we love waiting for us there, — father, and mother, and brothers, and children ; there in great company they await us, they who are sure now never to die any more, but not yet sure of us. Oh, when we come to see them and embrace them, what gladness will it be both for us and for them ! "

Yet the joy of this meeting will be but one of the countless joys of heaven. Chief among them is this, — we shall see and forever possess our God. His true sheep will follow their good Shepherd through green pastures and beside still waters forever, in perfect peace in heaven. An inexpressibly blessed foretaste of that happiness is often granted those who kneel before the silent beauty of the repository on Holy Thursday and feed on Christ's Body and Blood on Easter Day. No wonder it is hard to turn back to the outer world from such a heaven on earth !

Yet there is a higher plane of the spiritual life than this ; higher, although a child may attain to it. Men have spoken with tender reverence of a " ninth beatitude " as they call it. You have heard it, the sweet saying, with its pathetic *heimweh* : " Blessed are the homesick, for they shall see home ! " We feel its force, this Eastertide, as the "*O Salutaris*" lingers in our hearing, and its wistful sigh thrills our answering souls : —

*" Qui vitam sine termino
Nobis donet in patria ! "*

But spiritual writers tell us likewise of an eighth sacrament, and it is the sacrament of the adorable will of God. Who feeds on that sacrament finds an abiding heaven here below. To do His will is the great thank-offering, the true

return, which we can make to the Good Shepherd Who gave His life for us ; and then, in making that offering, He gives us back a sacramental strength and spiritual sweetness that forever fill and fortify the soul.

You suffer? We all must suffer. You toil? It is the lot of fallen man. You see before you possible disgrace, a humiliation that blinds your eyes with tears, and sends the hot blood to your brow ? I envy you — for you drink of the very cup Christ drank of, and you walk on the royal road in the footsteps of your King. Do you *truly* wish to know what return you may make to Him Who first bore your shame, your sufferings, — yes, and far harder yet, your sins, — in His own body on the tree? It is this first, this last, this everywhere, — and without this offering all others, however magnificent and great in men's eyes, count for little : — to do God's will, and to suffer God's will, in perfect peace, with Him.

In the strength of God, — for without His grace we are utter weakness, and worse still than that, — in the strength of God lift up your eyes, and gaze with grave and steadfast calmness, unshrinking, on the sharp cross, or the monotonous daily work, or the on-coming shame, or the difficult vocation, that may lie before you. *It is the will of God.* Clasp that cross to your bosom, perform that work in His presence, drink that bitter cup to its very dregs with Him, follow the path when He calls you. One day you will be aware of a divine strength ; you will cry : “ All this is but a great spiritual communion with Him Who loved me and saved me ! ” You will know that you are living heaven's life on earth, in the power of that great sacrament of the adorable will of God !

THE PATH TO HOLINESS

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER — FEAST OF THE PATRONAGE
OF ST. JOSEPH

DO we wonder why the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph comes in the midst of the Paschal Season, when our minds are no longer engrossed with memories of Bethlehem and Nazareth, but with the Resurrection and the Risen Lord? After the Resurrection, certain saints rose from the dead, and, at the Ascension, certain saints passed gloriously through heaven's gates, — freed captives rejoicing around their conquering King. Who can doubt that the dear St. Joseph went first among them, entering into the joy of his Lord, his foster-Child?

To-day, while we look up to him in his high place near Jesus Christ, and seek his patronage in our myriad wants and woes, shall we not seek it first and most earnestly in our endeavors to know and do the holy will of God? The flowers are budding, and the trees are bursting into leaf; all nature is flooded with beauty and life and bloom. It is a picture of what our Lord longs to find in His people's hearts, when He comes among us to gather lilies.

Is there any set way to attain true holiness? Not necessarily; and courage comes with the reply. In the Life of Mme. Swetchine, and in Father Faber's "Notes on Doctrinal and Spiritual Subjects," occur some striking thoughts which have a noticeable connection with each other, and bear upon our inquiry. The Russian convert writes: —

"There is a species of sanctity which, by virtue of its regular, balanced, harmonious character, I shall call classical. This sanctity, perfectly self-poised and in keeping, its present a logical sequence of its past, and harmonious in all its

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elements, has a sphere, a spirit, a walk, and laws of its own. God holds perfect sway over this sort of sanctity ; He rules it justly and kindly, and has pleasure in it, as in the most perfect image of the regular and immutable laws of creation. Another kind of holiness there is, freer, more individual, more bold, swifter in its flight, more ardent, more devoted, more self-abandoned, it may be, in its love. It is the holiness to which those are called whom I should name the children of Providence ; those whom God has sought out ; whom He has found in the midst of all sorts of snares and perils ; whom He has folded in His bosom, as if to shield them from His own right hand's gesture of dismissal."

The English convert, in his notes on his great Father, St. Philip Neri, speaks of the saint's absence of set rules and methods, his penitents being kept in their own spheres and at their social duties, he interfering little with their external things. He speaks also of his spirit of prayer, so full of liberty as to method ; of his variety of direction without any marked technical peculiarity ; and of his own spirituality singularly free, and left to God's action on him day by day. Then Father Faber goes on to say that there are two schools of holiness in the Church, — the school of captivity and the school of liberty, — and that St. Philip, like St. Francis de Sales, was singularly of the latter ; that it resulted from his immense devotion to the Person of the Holy Ghost, and that docility to inspirations was to him instead of rule. This made him intensely interior. God was his one demand in himself and in others.

"Both systems are holy," Father Faber writes. "I do not say that one is in itself better than the other ; both are from God. But I bless God that He has given to His Church the system of liberty as well as that of holy captivity ; because I never could be spiritual on the captivity system,

whereas I hope that I may some day or other attain to spirituality on the other system."

Does this mean a doing away with the virtue of obedience? Indeed it does not. Humility and obedience are among its first and fairest flowers. She who, more than any other created being, lived by the Holy Spirit's guidance, was the humblest, the holiest, the lowliest, of all the human race. Does it not rather mean that as devotion to the Holy Spirit waxes strong among us, we shall become more conscious of and more docile to His sway; and that, under His guidance, high personal sanctity is possible in every state of life? Certainly none of us will deny the truth of that terse assertion that He is the Holy Spirit, and that we need to be spiritualized. "Sanctity is a contagion," said a wise and great Bishop. And the day is coming when the Spirit of the Lord shall run to and fro like flame among us, setting us on fire with His resistless love.

The great Père Lallemant, in his "Spiritual Doctrine," writes: "The gifts of the Holy Spirit, without reasoning, without perplexity, show us what is best, enabling us to discern it in the light of God, with more or less of evidence, according to the degree in which we possess Him." And his brother Jesuit, St. Jure, director of the saintly De Renty, says: "The Holy Spirit is continually calling the soul inwards, continually inducing recollection and the concentration of the thoughts; continually prompting it to act, both interiorly and exteriorly, with great peace, in a manner devoid of passion, yet not simply reasonable but divine."

Remember once again, high personal sanctity is not tied to any one state or calling; it is possible everywhere, and a child may gain it. Let us beg St. Joseph, special patron of souls who are striving to live near to Jesus and Mary, to obtain for each of us a complete oneness with God's will by the grace of the Holy Ghost. In the entire quiet abandon-

ment of a soul to the impression of the Divine Spirit, God is to that soul, as has been finely said, "like a mighty magnet, the operation being not fitful nor periodical, but continual and unabated, through weariness and languor, through joy and peace."

THE DIVINE EXPEDIENT

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

WE open the Missal at the Fourth Sunday after Easter, and find these astonishing words: "I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go."

Expedient that the Risen Saviour leave His feeble flock! Expedient that He intrust to that handful of men the conquest of a world! Expedient that He, the light of their eyes, go from them, when they are just drawing calm breath again, after the stormy days of His passion and His pain!

May the great Mother of God, Our Lady of Good Counsel and of Divine Wisdom, help us to meditate aright on this marvellous saying of her Son!

Mark how He continues: "It is expedient for you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

Who is this Paraclete? We call Him more familiarly by other titles, — the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. We never bless ourselves, or say the Creed or the formula of Baptism, but we speak His name and profess our faith in Him. We invoke Him Sunday after Sunday in the *Veni Creator*, and seek His graces in Confirmation, and keep His magnificent festival at Pentecost. Yet to how many of us is He a real, component part of our lives? How many of us have a clear knowledge of what or who God the Holy Ghost really is?

Probably His name is in itself a partial explanation of our dulness. We know that our souls are more important than our bodies; that they are rulers, in fact, and masters of our bodies; yet how vague is our conception, in thought or in fancy, of this volatile, subtile, invisible, masterful soul of ours! We cannot touch it, or hear it, or see it, this constant companion, this substantial force, from which were our bodies to be separated for a minute's space, they would cease to touch aught at all, or to see or hear.

Our souls are to us mysteries far deeper than these bodies of ours, although they themselves are enigmas mighty enough. Therefore that very name, the Holy Spirit, is mysterious; and we need feel no surprise if we find difficulties here. What do theologians tell us of Him?

"The Holy Ghost is the sacred kiss of the Father and the Son," writes St. Bernard, "their imperturbable peace, their undivided love." — "Lifted up above the storms of earth, far from its confusing strife," says Mgr. Preston, "is the home where the Spirit of the Father and the Son abides. This is the Love of the Holy Trinity; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." — "God the Father is uncreated being," writes Cardinal Manning, "God the Son is uncreated intelligence, and God the Holy Ghost is uncreated love; and the uncreated being, intelligence, and love of God are God. God the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and the Son, perfects the mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity." — And time and again Sacred Scripture tells that we are the temples of this same Holy Ghost, Who is Lord and Life and Love.

But let us come closer yet to this Infinite Being, each one of us, you and I, poor wretches though we know ourselves to be. Consider first that it is an undoubted necessity of the Catholic faith to believe that every work which God does outside Himself is the work of all the Three Persons

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equally; and that it is equally of faith that it is the Son, and not the Father or the Holy Spirit, Who assumed a created nature. Then, naturally, piety may have its special feelings towards each of the Three Divine Persons, feelings which flow from Their personal distinctions for instance. All this, though beyond our comprehension, should never trouble us; for how can a finite creature expect or wish to comprehend an infinite God? Ignorant and vain though we are, we ought to be wise enough and humble enough to know that!

God the Father seems to us, — does He not? — as a vast, loving Power, outside of ourselves, compassionate, patient; our Creator, Who made us out of nothing, Who takes care of us; Who *pities* us (to use the tender words of Holy Writ), even as a father hath pity on his children; One who knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth — inspired word that the tired mind rests upon! — *remembereth* that we are but dust; and who will one day raise us up from the dust, to endless life with Him.

God the Son is our very Brother Who took our nature on Him, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; and Who will wear that nature eternally when time and earth are dead; our Lover, standing outside our hearts, knocking and tirelessly waiting to find entrance and welcome there; our Child, coming to us in the Blessed Sacrament, to lie in the cradle of our hearts, and let us brood over Him and sing to Him with the music of our prayers. Yet, amazing thought! theology names Him the Divine Wisdom, a most loving Wisdom truly, but not distinctively the Divine Love. Who, then, is God the Holy Ghost?

Mary, Queen of the Blessed Trinity! answer us. Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, Spouse of the Holy Ghost! reply that the Holy Ghost is Love.

Here lies the key to a whole world's mysteries, a subject

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vast enough for a lifetime. Let us to-day take but one thought from among the many.

Said one of the most famous of the great French preachers: "The world saw the saints, and believed in holiness." How were those saints formed? By the personal action of the Holy Ghost on the individual soul. At this moment, as we speak or write, He is at work upon your soul and mine; no less than God Himself at work within our hearts. No wonder that Boussuet in his grand phraseology speaks of the incomparable seriousness of the Christian life! Let us kneel down, for we are actually in the real presence of God the Holy Ghost, and beg Him to reveal Himself to us, and teach us what is love and how to love. For love is the fulfilling of the law.

THE SUPREME SWAY OF THE SUPERNATURAL

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

WE have reached the feast that seems to be, in a certain sense, the end. Next Thursday our Blessed Lord will return to the heavens whence He came. We follow Him, with His Mother and His chosen disciples, out of the city of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives; we gaze with them, for the last time on earth, upon His face in its complete and never to be rivalled beauty of holiness; with them we catch His final words of benediction, and with them watch in silent ecstasy His upward rising through the air. Then all is over, and a cloud receives Him out of our sight. Yet still we stand, and still we gaze and watch, our hearts following His Sacred Heart on into the glorious kingdom where God the Father awaits the return of His victorious Son, Who has won back a rebel world to Him.

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Do we hear star call upon star in majestic chorus, as He goes upward and past them, He that made them first, and set them in their order, and gave even to the comet and the nebulae a law, a form, a place? Once again do not the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy? Does not earth herself catch great echoes of that triumphant, tremendous, gloriously jubilant chorus of the rejoicing spheres, as their Lord goes, Conqueror, home? When the grand gates swing open, does no magnificent thunder of welcome surge outward and downward to us who listen below?

By prophet and psalmist the heavenly scene is predicted. "God ascended in triumph," cries David, "and the Lord at the sound of the trumpet." In his twenty-third psalm¹ occurs that stupendous dialogue, as though Michael, highest archangel, spake out, in a sudden silence of heaven, when all who dwelt there had merged every other feeling in one great hush of awful waiting for Him Who was coming swiftly to them through the air: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes! and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates! and the King of Glory shall come in."

Then, as never yet ocean answered ocean when storms drove loudest, "Who is this King of Glory?" the nine choirs cry back to him, in a harmony and a grandeur which mortal men could not hear now and live.

How swift the answer: "The Lord Who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your gates, O ye princes! and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates! and the King of Glory shall enter in."

"Who is this King of Glory?"

"The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory."

But when we turn from the Old to the New Testament, there is a marked difference in the treatment of this stu-

¹ According to the Latin Vulgate.

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pendous event. True, we are told that many bodies of the saints arose, and walked in the city, and went up with Him on His Ascension Day. But how calmly we are told! Our spiritual instincts inform us that the poet's words are sublimely true:—

“And then was heard afar
Star answering to star:
‘Lo! these have come,
Followers of Him Who gave
His life their lives to save,
And now their palms they wave,
Brought safely home!’”

Yet, so far as the Apostles' language is concerned, how gravely, how calmly all is said!

“While they looked on, He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

Have we not reached here the central characteristic of the mind of God? Do not those who are most like Him, resemble Him most accurately?

“The king's sons,” says Bossuet, “born to the purple, speak without emphasis of crowns and of sceptres.”

“Hear Jesus Christ, how He speaks!” cries Baunard, in treating of our Lord's discourse before His Passion. “His eloquence is sublime, because its basis is naturally divine. You do not find in the words of Jesus the vivid excitement which inspired the prophets with their burning ardor and their bold imagery when the Holy Ghost, raising them upon His wings, transports them into the midst of superhuman visions. Nothing in Jesus bespeaks the momentary exaltation of an exceptional hour; the Spirit of God does not transport Him, but it dwells in Him; He is not possessed by it, He possesses Himself. Brilliancy does not dazzle Him, for He is light. He requires no effort to attain the summit; for it is the abiding-place of His soul, and He

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dwells in the very bosom of the mystery which He reveals. . . . The word is sown, like the grain in the field, with profusion, for God holds the treasury; with calmness, for He is its master; with simplicity, for He can lower Himself without losing aught of His grandeur; finally, with confidence, for He knows the hour and the day of the harvest. He Himself once defined eloquence as the flowing of the heart: *Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur* — Out of the fulness of the heart, the mouth speaketh. Was it not here the deep overflow of the very soul of God?"

Even the great word-painter, Faber, in his wonderful book, "At the Foot of the Cross," in speaking of our Lady of Sorrows watching in silent anguish all the awful Passion, and in describing the indignities heaped upon our most holy Redeemer, even to "that wild yell of blasphemous rejection which still rings in our ears and still echoes in history," exclaims: "Quietly, almost coldly, we seem to say these words. Alas! many words are not needed. Besides, *what words could they be?*"

We have touched upon a great law of the spiritual life, namely, that when men come closest to the Infinite, excitement dies, and there is a divine calm, a marvellous something, far beyond mere self-control and self-mastery, — the entire union of the entire man with God. It follows upon the Ascension, when men have lost their relish for things earthly, and their hearts are always fixed on heavenly things, and the Holy Ghost in tongues of flame has come. In this peace, saints and saintly souls have borne the worst of calumnies in perfect and unanswering patience, till their foes have learned that there are those whom they are utterly powerless to browbeat, before whose Christ-like, prolonged, determined silence calumny at last itself grows dumb. In this calm, the excitement which thrills and absorbs the intellectual world to-day, even as the electric current thrills

and guides more and more the business world, dies down completely, fading into nothingness. We look upward, and we see God, reigning absolute King forever, in that superb "*leisure* of His long eternity"; and lo! it becomes apparent to us that, through and above our passionate anxiety and wild turmoil, there is a supreme sway of the supernatural, and that we can afford to wait God's time.

JERUSALEM, VISION OF PEACE

FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

HOW can we portray that strange event, which mortal men actually saw, when on the Galilean hilltop they watched their Lord majestically moving upward, till a cloud received Him out of their sight? How could they endure it, to see Him going where they could not follow? What was earth without Jesus, to those apostles who had lived three years in the sunshine of His presence? What was life to His Mother, the very Life of whose life He had been?

Our faith is so dull, our lives are so of the earth earthy, that we dimly guess, if we guess at all, what the first Ascension Day was like in its mingled joy and pain. For the apostles, for the Blessed Mother, it needed no less a Comforter than the Third Person of the Majestic Trinity, the Holy Spirit Himself. He came, likewise, as the collect for the feast expresses it, "that we who believe that our Redeemer ascended this day into heaven, may also have our hearts always fixed on heavenly things."

Vision of Peace — this is what the word Jerusalem means. Thither, to the heavenly Jerusalem, our hearts should be lifted up to-day; our conversation should be in heaven. The

Holy Ghost has come to transform us into the likeness of our Divine Redeemer, so that we, too, may present ourselves a living sacrifice unto God ; and one great help to this will be, sometimes during the year to leave earth for a while, and dwell above. To this end our all-wise God sends to His children these holy days, and bids us watch His Jesus and ours rising upward, away from this miserable earth, its turmoil and distress, up to the changeless city, the fair and far-off Vision of Peace.

Undisturbed by any storm or strife it lies there, that heavenly Jerusalem where God reigns supreme in His unruffled joy. Three in One, and One in Three, immutable is that majestic Godhead upon the great white throne : perfect power, perfect wisdom, perfect love, perfect unity, — a peace that passes all possible understanding, — the peace of the Triune God. Were any measure possible whereby man might even seem to measure the measureless eternity, nowhere could he find a possible moment when that perfect peace, that complete oneness, has been in the slightest degree disturbed. It is the bliss of heaven, the rapture of the elect, the endless, never-to-be-broken Vision of Peace, in the new Jerusalem which is to be our eternal home.

Round that throne are four and twenty ancients sitting, robed in white and crowned with gold. Before that throne seven lamps are burning, the grandly transcendent gifts of the Spirit, like tongues of flame. Four living creatures, like to a lion, a calf, a thing man-faced, and an eagle flying, cry ceaselessly, "Holy, Holy, Holy," to the Almighty Lord. Before the throne, there spreads out a sea of glass like crystal, mirroring tranquilly the unruffled, perfect peace of the city and its King.

Nine heavenly hierarchies echo back the "Holy, Holy, Holy." Each choir has its separate state and place in the court of heaven. God Himself has named them and

ordained them. Blessed those souls on earth who try now to know and love them, for they help to lift our fickle hearts upward, and to keep them always fixed on heavenly things.

Angels, archangels, principalities, virtues, powers, dominations, thrones, cherubim, seraphim, — each choir has its special office, so distinct and real that they bloom out, even to us mortals, in separate, unearthly beauty, with varying heavenly attributes recognizable by men. But, everywhere, crowning all, is this supreme and unalterable characteristic of unbroken unity and perfect peace. No slightest discord mars the harmony of their matchless singing; no touch of envy blights the tireless love that has no thought of self. Forever rapt in the vision of peace are these citizens of the heavenly city, these immortal courtiers of the eternal King. Human intelligence can not count them; yet all are one, and only one, in their unutterable love of each other and of the great God, Three in One.

After this, — who are these others who dwell at peace in heaven? Let the apostle answer: "After this — I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne." From this multitude rises one cry of unbroken harmony: "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb!" They hunger no more; they thirst no more; unrest and woe of body and soul are forever stilled. The peace of God surpassing understanding is forever theirs, who are one with God in a perfect union that shall never pass away.

My brother, my sister, whoever you may be who read this meditation on Ascension Day, pause in your prayer, and listen to another sound that mingles with these thoughts of heavenly things. Through that unalterable harmony of love and peace, that sound echoes to us from the distant

days of the Agony in the Garden, and from the breaking Heart of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

“Not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in Me: that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as We also are One. I in them, and Thou in Me; that they may be made perfect in one; *and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me.*”

My brother, my sister, is not the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven? Has not the one true God His one true Church below, — even here on earth *Jerusalem, Vision of Peace?*

THE ASCENSION-TIDE NOVENA

THE festival of the Ascension is a feast that seems to belong more to heaven than earth. The collect for the day expresses this feeling plainly:—

“Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that as we believe Thine only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, to have this day ascended into the heavens, so we may also in heart and mind dwell amid heavenly things. Through the same, our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Where do we dwell in heart and mind? Alas for many, it is an age of materialism. Give a man money, education, success; add a fair outward show of kindness and probity; and what more will the world ask for him? Yet are these the heavenly things of which the collect speaks?

We Catholics are placed, however, in a spiritual kingdom, whose joys and loveliness neither our sins nor sorrows

can efface or dim. Magnificently did Archbishop Ryan express this at the time of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore : —

“Where is the Church of to-day? for it lives with the communicated vitality of God the Holy Ghost, Who abides in it. Where is it to-day? Look around and see it represented in this great Council. How glorious it is, how real, how living! Alive with the life of God, and strong with the strength of God, and beautiful with the beauty of God! To it to-day may He say in the words of Scripture: ‘Thou art made exceedingly beautiful, because of Mine own beauty which I have put upon thee.’ Not beauty in the mere external pomp of ritual, not in the sheen of these golden mitres, or the splendor of precious vestments. These are but the variegated garments of the King’s daughter. Not even in the individual sanctity of any who wear them; but in their official position as representatives of God, ‘because of My own beauty, which I have put upon thee.’”

That life also which each of us lives with God alone, has many a time become, and many a time will yet become, a storehouse of heavenly joys. After all, what more did St. Catherine of Siena believe than what we believe, namely, that God made man, and preserved him, and redeemed him, *because He loved man*? Yet we are told that this belief made her life a long ecstasy; she saw and understood that there was nothing in this world to live for, but God and the souls He died to save; and this is the history of her sanctity.

You see that it is not a question of her austerities, or we might well shrink back dismayed. The Venerable Mother Barat said a very encouraging thing in that regard: — “The saints of our time are different from those who preceded them. The strong constitutions of former days enabled them to bear great labors and immense austerities. It is almost

the contrary with us as regards bodily health. And, as the Author of all sanctity acts always in the same manner and in the same spirit, we must make up for our deficiencies in that respect by an increase of humility, patience, gentleness, and so on."

What is needed to make each of our lives a long ecstasy like St. Catherine's, a treasure of spiritual light and strength like Mother Barat's, a joy utterly independent of wealth and success as St. Alexis' life was? It partly needs earnest and frequent prayer, like this of Blessed Nicholas de Flüe, the soldier, magistrate, husband, father, hermit, saint; an upright prayer without subterfuge or reservation on our part: —

"O Lord my God! take away from me what keeps me from Thee! O Lord my God! give me whatever brings me nearer to Thee! O Lord my God! take me from myself, and make me belong to Thee, make me Thine own!"

Then, in this age of materialism, we need — let us say it and repeat it, even to weariness — we sorely need increased and intense devotion to the Holy Spirit. We talk much of devotion to the Sacred Heart, and holy and beautiful that devotion is; yet something more is plainly required. Though we place the appealing picture before men's eyes, and induce them to join the League, and to say the Act of Consecration, still there is something wanting; the love of that Divine Heart is not met with anything like a corresponding love. How can we expect to do this of ourselves? Can aught but the love of a God correspond to the love of a God? We must seek the help of the Holy Ghost.

More than eighteen centuries are gone since the Church, gathered in the little upper room in Jerusalem, made the first Pentecostal Novena. Let us begin with her, this week, a Novena for Pentecost, that our cowardly hearts may be filled with strength and light and love, and a keen desire to

do great things for God. During this Novena, let us meditate often on these words of Archbishop Keane, who has reason to know whereof he speaks: "In our days of universal aspiration after popular enlightenment, filled with so many dangers from mistaken science, unspiritual aims, and mere externality of life, it has pleased God to breathe forth the first beginnings of a *special* devotion to the Holy Ghost, and to give it form in the Confraternity of the Servants of the Holy Ghost. I am convinced that the time is not far distant, when the devotion to the Paraclete, the Spirit of light and love, will be the predominant devotion of the Church. Happy are they who have the grace of tasting and appreciating its first fruits!" Let us daily and more than daily, during this Novena, say this brave prayer, by whom composed I know not, but a note like a soldier's clarion rings through it: —

"PRAYER FOR COURAGEOUS SOULS

"Lord ! Thy Cross is high and uplifted ; I cannot mount it in my own strength. But Thou hast promised : '*I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Myself.*'

"Draw me, then, from my sins to repentance, from darkness to faith, from the flesh to the spirit, from coldness to ardent devotion, from weak beginnings to a perfect end, from smooth and easy paths, if it be Thy will, to a higher and holier way, from fear to love, from earth to heaven, from myself to Thee.

"And as Thou hast said : '*No man can come to Me except the Father Who sent Me draw him,*' give unto me the Spirit Whom the Father hath sent in Thy Name, that in Him, and through Him, I, being wholly changed, may hasten unto Thee, and go out no more for ever."

OUR LADY OF THE ASCENSION

HOW many of us ever read or heard anything at any great length about Our Lady, which seemed to us thoroughly satisfactory or all that we wanted? Perhaps Faber's "At the Foot of the Cross" comes near to it; but, ordinarily, is not the heart best satisfied by some brief saying like that from the Spanish: "She never can forget what it cost her to become our Mother," or the cry of the young Pole, St. Stanislaus: "How much do I love her? Is it not enough to say, *she is my Mother?*" A remarkable poem, published some years ago in a magazine devoted to Mary, sums up in brief compass what many volumes have striven to say of her.

AD MARIAM

- " Why strew to thee our fading flowers ?
 Why melt our tapers at thy shrine ?
 What is there on this earth of ours
 That can be worthy to be thine,
 For whom too poor a vesture are
 Sun, moon, and empyrean star ?
- " Why tax our dullard earthly wit,
 And feebly strive with tongues of clay
 To tune to thee a chorus fit,
 To frame to thee a roundelay,
 Whose praises worthily to hymn
 O'ertask the blessed cherubim ?
- " Can aught within us or around,
 On earth beneath, in heaven on high,
 Or yet within creation's bound,
 Avail thy state to magnify ?
 What shall fresh dignity afford
 Unto the Mother of the Lord ?

" What work of artist hand and brain,
 In their divinest moments born,
 Hath worth to hem thy queenly train,
 Or footstool of thy throne adorn,
 From whom was taken flesh to be
 Wedded to the Divinity ?

" What spoil of forests or of fields,
 What gem from earth's profoundest womb,
 Or pearl that deepest ocean yields,
 Hath price enough for thee, — of whom
 Christ took the blood that was to pay
 Our ransom upon Calvary ?

" And if the millions of our race
 Should give themselves thy slaves to be,
 If kings should bow before thy face,
 And peoples pledge their fealty,
 What were it to His service 'neath
 The cottage-roof of Nazareth ?

" O thou in whom the Eternal King,
 Whose arm is strong, great things hath wrought !
 Whatever to thy feet we bring,
 Shall we exceed thy due in aught,
 Until an offering we invent
 Greater than the Omnipotent ? "

When our Blessed Lord ascended into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of sight, can we imagine what love was poured forth upon His Mother by those who had watched Him go from them into heaven, and who knew what she had been to Him on earth? Consider what a perfect pattern she must have been to them of one whose heart was, as the Collect for Ascension Day prays that ours may be, "always fixed on heavenly things." Are our lives at all like her life? Consider her hearing Mass. Imagine her receiving the Holy Eucharist at the hand of the beloved disciple. Are our Communion, our hearing of Mass, at all like hers? Do we lead a life of the spirit as she did? or are we of the earth earthy, minding earthly things?

Among the volumes which the late Brother Azarias has left for our profit and that are his lasting memorial among us, is one upon the culture of the spiritual sense. A corresponding volume might easily be written on the *lack* of the culture of the spiritual sense. And by the spiritual we mean something far loftier and nobler than the intellectual. A man who cannot so much as write his name may be much more highly cultured in the spiritual sense than one who is widely read and a deep student in worldly matters. No power on earth keeps this truth so clearly and constantly before men's eyes as the Catholic Church, established by Jesus Christ.

As a great French writer says : " It is a question both of seeing very secret things, and of seeing them with a great clearness. . . . Humility of mind, purity of heart, simplicity and fervor of prayer, do more for us here than sagacity. Intuition sometimes renders us greater service than reasoning ; we often walk on this road by instinct, we live especially by influences ; in a word, grace is here the great mistress ; it is everything to abandon ourselves to it, and to keep ourselves thus abandoned." That profound scholar and wonderful theologian, the mighty doctor, St. Thomas of Aquin, declared that he had learned much less from books than from his crucifix and from prayer. In like manner the Church wisely keeps before our eyes and our minds the image of Mary, that we may learn by her example how to love our Divine Lord, and how to serve Him, and how best to ascend with Him to His glorious heaven.

St. Augustine writes that it is useful to make many books for many people, in diverse style but no differing faith, even on the same subjects, so that the matter itself may reach the greatest number, some after this fashion, and some after that. Our Lady is one of these great books of God, one of the grandest, holiest, and best ; a spotless, immaculate

volume ; the very seat of wisdom ; inviolate, undefiled, most admirable, most pure, most chaste, most renowned, full of divine grace and the overflowing unction of the very Spirit of God. In humility of mind and purity of heart, with true simplicity and fervor of prayer, we shall learn from her that which will make us wise with true wisdom, and will fill us with unearthly delight.

How can we *explain* to a Protestant that we love our Mother ! How can we explain this spiritual love to the material world ! She that bore Jesus Christ on her bosom, and cradled Him in her arms ; she that fed Him, and kissed Him, and felt His baby kisses on her lips, — where is she now ? what does she ? Ask the doubter this. She that stood beside the cross, and beheld the risen Jesus, and watched Him go up to heaven, and saw the cloud receive Him from her sight, — where is she now ? what does she ? Has she no love and no prayers for us, for whom her Jesus died ? And if you could do for your mother what Jesus can do for His Mother, *what would you do*, O doubter, O questioner, O caviller, O unbeliever in the love of God and man for Mary, the true Mother of the God-Man, Jesus Christ ?

As for us, whose teacher is the infallible Church, that Church whose realm is the supernatural, and whose children are trained from infancy in spiritual things and the culture of the spiritual sense, we look up to-day to see Our Lord ascended, Conqueror of death forevermore ; and we beseech Mary to teach us how to live our lives like hers, above earthly things, with our conversation in the heavens, feeding like her upon the very Body and Blood of Christ, until we too shall be received into heaven our fatherland, to be forever with the Lord.

THE SUNDAY OF HOLY EXPECTATION

SUNDAY IN OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION

THE Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension is the Sunday of expectation, of waiting, of holy hope. Our Divine Lord has ascended into heaven, but He has promised His disciples that One shall come, Whose blessed advent shall actually make it "expedient" for them that He should go away. And so in the introit the Church exclaims: —

"Hear, O Lord, my voice, with which I have cried out to Thee, Alleluia. My heart hath said it to Thee: I have sought Thy face: I will seek Thy face, O Lord: turn not Thy face from me. The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?" Then, after the epistle, comes the versicle: "I will not leave you orphans: I am going, but I will come to you again, and your hearts shall rejoice."

All men know what it is to hope and to expect, but all men do not know how to wait long for God. He tells us of a future good, but He does not tell us when that good shall be. It is His will that we should wait patiently for Him, and show our trust in His loving providence, no matter how dark the outlook is. Yet, time and again, we make that pitiful complaint our own: "I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried; mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God. . . . I am in trouble, hear me speedily." And, time and again, there is no answer; the road grows thornier, the sky blacker, the burden heavier, the light more dim. Nevertheless, we tread the path of the predestinate, the path that leads to heaven.

"What are these that glow from afar,
 These that lean over the golden bar,
 Strong as the lion, meek as the dove,
 With open arms and hearts of love?
 They the blessed ones gone before,
 They the blessed forevermore.
 Out of great tribulation they went
 Home to their home of heaven-content;
 Through flood, or blood, or furnace fire,
To the rest that fulfils desire."

It is the old story. "Everywhere," as St. Augustine teaches, "everywhere the greater joy is ushered in by the greater pain." The eternal rest that fulfils desire comes after the long struggle, the continued supplication, the dire distress. Before ever Augustine, with all his knowledge, had learned the lessons of heavenly patience and the art of hoping against hope, there was one who was hoping for him, having patience with him, waiting for him, when all human hope seemed gone; and whose name stands uplifted in the Church, that men may call upon it, and take courage to pray unceasingly to God for the salvation of immortal souls.

For seventeen years Augustine's mother, Monica, prayed for her husband's conversion, and seventeen more for her wayward and sinning son. In both cases the prayer was granted; God gave her her heart's desire, and did not deny her the request of her lips. But who shall attempt to describe the anguish, or who shall number the petitions, the penances, the tears, who shall estimate the value of that undying patience of a woman's love, that won at last from God the prize she sought? And who can think without shuddering of the depth of that dark gulf, beside which she had to walk year after year in ever increasing misery, yet ever calling upon God through everything: "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee!" She saw her son, once enrolled as a Christian catechumen, embrace heresy,

teach it, use his wonderful influence over men's minds to pervert and enslave them; she beheld him an open and proud apostate; and she knew that he lived, moreover, in open and shameless sin. "O my God!" exclaims her son, that child of too many tears ever to be lost, "O my God! if I had died then, where would have been my soul? But I was preserved by my mother's prayers. Never can I describe what her love for me was. . . . If I did not long ago perish in sin and misery, it is because of the long and faithful tears with which she pleaded for me."

The victory was won at last, but it was because of those tears immortalized in the Church's annals, — those well-nigh unceasing tears wherewith that patient mother had pleaded before God by day and night; and because of the sacrifice of her heart's blood a thousand times untiringly renewed, year upon year, for her son's salvation. Then, even upon earth, came "the rest that fulfils desire"; the rest that embalmed with its heavenly sweetness, even here, the mother's soul. She saw her son not only a repentant sinner, but pressing forward with strong endeavor to the heights of sanctity; she saw him not content with the ordinary standard of ordinary goodness, but absorbed in God, and yearning for entire union with Him. Can we estimate the joy that thrilled her, or picture to ourselves her overwhelming happiness? Ary Scheffer has painted for us on canvas what St. Augustine himself has yet more beautifully portrayed in words, how "she and I stood alone, leaning in a certain window which looked into the garden of the house where we were, near Ostia. We were discoursing there together, alone, very sweetly; and forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we were inquiring between ourselves, in the presence of the Truth, which Thou art, O God! of what sort the eternal life of the saints was to be,

which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man."

It may be that some one will read these lines, whose heart is heavy with the burden of sinning souls ; some one who has prayed long and fervently, but whose prayers go unanswered, while the souls so dear sink deeper into sin. On this Sunday of holy expectancy, Monica and Augustine speak from heaven, bidding you in God's great name to persevere. "Man !" says St. Bernard, "if thou desirest a noble and holy life, and unceasingly prayest to God for it, thou shalt find it, though it be at the last hour and moment of thy existence ; and if thou find it not then, thou shalt find it in eternity. Of this be assured." Bind up those precious lives in the bundle of your life, and pray with like faith for them.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

PENTECOST SUNDAY

ON the first great Whit-Sunday, God the Holy Ghost came down to earth. We read with awe of that shaken house suddenly thrilled by a sound from heaven, — that mighty wind filling the house, — those cloven tongues of fire that cleft the air, — those just now timid apostles made strong in that Spirit of resistless might, Who gave to them to speak with divers tongues, and gave them, too, of His own divine power wherewith to speak.

It is a scene which we do not picture to ourselves sufficiently, a fact in the Church's history on which we do not often enough meditate ; yet it is not the first consideration upon which we will dwell to-day.

Each soul of man is a little room where God the Holy Ghost has come. We heard no sound that thrilled the

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whole house of our being, we saw no light of burning flame, we felt nothing ; yet God, the Spirit of light and love, was truly there. He is the Comforter, for He is Love ; and the prayer which the Church, our wise Mother, puts on our lips to-day is that by His direction we may relish what is right, and always enjoy His consolation. And as we read in the Missal the divine office of Pentecost, we find, side by side with the description of the loud wind, the flame, the miraculous gifts, another description of perfect peace, of divine comfort, of interior joy, that moves us to look inward rather than outward, and to become silent and still in the temple of our souls, even while the whole universe outside is shaken at that sound of the unearthly voice of Almighty God.

May God teach us indeed to know and love the Guest within our souls ! The hymn which the Church selects to-day, describes Him to us as Father of the poor, Giver of all good gifts, sweet Guest of the soul, sweet Refuge, Rest in labor, Comfort in weeping. We seek for comfort hither and thither, we seek for light ; yet comfort and light are within us, all the time. We live in great anxiety, troubling ourselves about our future, or our friends, or our vocation, and grieving lest we shall some time offend our Blessed Lord Who died to save us from our sin ; yet that Lord Himself has said in to-day's gospel of consolation : " Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid." And God the Holy Ghost is Love itself, and in His abiding presence within us is our sure source of peace.

We understand now why St. Augustine cried : " Love God, and do what you will ! " For, as he explains to us, from this root of divine love nothing except good can come. We do all the good that we do, by the might of Him Who is true Love and cannot err.

It would be the beginning of perfect peace, and of many blessed works of grace in the Church to-day, could we grasp this thought more completely, and yield ourselves, like little children in their mother's care, to the guiding Spirit's sway. Bishop Gay describes the state of such a man in terms that rouse a holy envy, though that state comes, indeed, to some after bitter spiritual distress, after sharp temptation, after trials that have burnt like fire, and sorrows that have made earth's lights grow dim. But it comes by God's gift always, whether through pain or not; and no marvel if it be through suffering, since the crucifixion and the death of their Master preceded the Spirit's advent to the first and dearest friends of the world's Redeemer.

But when the work of pain is accomplished, and the soul has learned how utterly useless its own efforts are, — when pride is crushed, and we know at last that the life of the Spirit must be our life, rather than any wordly ambition or intellectual gift or human love, then, says the French bishop concerning such a soul: "It has entered upon its rest. *This soul walks always as carrying God.* It thinks no longer of what it is; it does not regard itself, it does not count upon itself, and, consequently, it does not count upon persons or things. Love has become its only light, and consequently its only measure. It gravitates inviolably, and makes all gravitate with it, towards its supreme centre, or rather towards its only centre — towards Jesus, Whom alone it loves, and to Whom it refers everything it has, and all that it is."

Consequently, as we now see, it has attained "the gift of the forgetfulness of itself." Love of God possesses it and overmasters it, in the most perfect peace. It loves the whole world, and like Jesus would die for the whole world, were it possible; for what Jesus did, it would do. No human being is too low or mean or sinful for it to stoop to,

and embrace in the arms of perfect pity, and strive to win to God. For be they black or white, slave or free, rich or poor, sinner or saint, God made them, God loved them, God died for them, and God desires to make them holy and give them heaven. To the sinner, the heathen, the vilest and lowest, no matter how vile or low, a soul possessed by the Holy Ghost's fire of love draws nigh with real and unshrinking tenderness; and as Peter Claver embraced the negroes staggering up from the slave ships, blind and filthy, and more hideous yet within, so such a Christian seeks the sinner in his misery, and teaches him to love God and to serve Him, undeterred by what the world thinks or says. This is why the Catholic Church is the mistress and queen of the universe, because of the work of God's Spirit in truly apostolic men.

THE GREAT GIFT

PENTECOST MONDAY

MANY have been the pathetic strains which touch the heart, since David's lament over his true friend, Jonathan, who had loved him as his own soul: "I grieve for thee, my brother Jonathan, exceeding beautiful. As the mother loveth her only son, so did I love thee"; and in later life his far more anguished cry: "My son Absalom, Absalom my son! who would grant me that I might die for thee, Absalom my son, my son Absalom!" Through the ages the lament goes on, down to Tennyson's "In Memoriam" of that soul that to him was "the sweetest that ever looked with human eyes"; and to his sister-poet's simpler and tenderer strain: —

"The heart that like a staff was one
For mine to lean and rest upon,
The strongest on the longest day
With steadfast love, is caught away;
And yet my days go on, go on."

Were all these elegies united into one supreme expression of poignant woe, could it do more than shadow forth the grief the Apostles felt when they saw their dearest Lord ascend from earth, and a cloud receive Him out of their sight? Yet He had said a wonderful thing to them, that it was expedient for them that He should go away. They went back to Jerusalem, and tarried there in prayer and expectation, till the strange promise of their Lord should be fulfilled. Nevertheless, how could it possibly be expedient for them that He, their dearest and truest Friend, should go away?

Nine days passed in prayer and waiting; on the tenth day the answer to the great Novena came. There was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and tongues of fire came down upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost; from that day they went forth with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God.

What is, or who is, that Holy One, Whose presence could make it well for the Apostles that their Master should leave them?

He is the Lord and Giver of life, says the Nicene Creed. God the Holy Ghost is uncreated Love; — the Holy Spirit is the true Teacher of prayer, the Mover of prayer; — grace is the supernatural presence and action of the Holy Spirit; — the Holy Spirit is the inspiration of the inner life of the regenerate man, and in that life is his Superior and Director; — so write Cardinal Manning, Bishop Ullathorne, Bishop Gay, Father Hecker. And St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches that the Holy Ghost works in us by Himself, truly sanctifying and uniting us to Himself, making us partakers of the Divine Nature.

When the mind is brought earnestly to bear upon what saints and doctors and holy writers have told us in regard to the Third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, the sub-

ject is found to be one of surpassing interest. Consider what Father Faber says in those singularly interesting "Notes on Spiritual and Doctrinal Subjects," gathered together by loving hands when his prolific brain found rest in death. He tells us that the Holy Spirit is actually dwelling within us, over and above the omnipresence of God, — quite different from the dwelling of the Blessed Sacrament within us, yet only to be paralleled by that.

Think of it! While we write or read this paper, He Who came in tongues of flame at the first Pentecost is actually dwelling now, — can it be possible? — in you, in me! All perfection, continues the great writer, consists in docility to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost; the faults of the saints come from some want of this docility forming the subject-matter of their faults, as disobedience to the Commandments is the subject-matter of positive sins. "*The common state of holy souls is as if free-will were almost gone.*"

Compare with this last statement the prayer of Thomas à Kempis: "Let me not be able to will or not will any otherwise than as Thou willest or willest not." O for a full answer to this prayer! What happiness would be ours, what heaven on earth! Do we not understand now why Father Faber says that "it is impossible not to rejoice in the operations of grace within the soul, for each augmentation of grace is a mission of a Divine Person, a more intimate blessed union with Him; and if we were slower, graver, less occupied and less precipitate in our spiritual life, we should feel this more than we do"?

Mark the words well, — slower, graver, less occupied, less precipitate, in our spiritual life. Let us leave for a time our ordinary portion of Martha, and take with Mary the better place at Jesus' feet. Then let us try, during this Pentecostal season, to enter into personal and living union with God the Holy Ghost.

Where shall we find Him? A greater teacher than Father Faber in the things which concern the spiritual life, St. John of the Cross, makes answer to all who hunger and thirst for perfection, and to love God indeed with the whole heart and soul and mind and strength :—

“O thou soul, most beautiful of creatures, who so earnestly longest to know the place where thy Beloved is, that thou mayest seek Him, and be united to Him! thou art *thyself* that very tabernacle where He dwells, the secret place of His retreat where He is hidden.

“Rejoice and exult, because all thy good and all thy hope is so near thee as to be within thee; yea, rather rejoice that thou canst not be without it; for lo! the kingdom of God is within you. So saith the Bridegroom Himself; and His servant, St. Paul, adds: ‘Ye are the temple of the living God.’”

These words should be sufficient to keep us silent for a space in reverent meditation, aided by consideration of one other thought: “The Holy Ghost awakeneth love.”

THE SUNDAY OF THE END

TRINITY SUNDAY

“There is nothing in life one-half so sweet as to think of God.”
— *The Blessed Sacrament*, FABER.

WE have passed through Advent and Christmas, through Lent and Easter, through Ascension and Pentecost. To-day we reach the aim and end, the final consummation of all things, the Triune God. The earth and the warring nations, the suns in their majestic orbits, the comets on their fiery roads, are in His sight as atoms that would wither at His glance. No ruin or sin of man

can tarnish His greatness, no suffering mar His joy. He is God over all, blessed forever. Before Him the Seraphim veil their faces, and the wise Cherubim are dumb. Yet He is the crown and the consummation of all devotions, wherein the heart finds its truest peace and final resting-place.

St. Teresa, in her "Castle of the Soul," compares the soul to a vast palace, containing, like heaven, many mansions or abodes — some higher, some lower, some on one side, some on the other, with a central apartment which is the chief, wherein takes place what is most secret of all that passes between God and the soul ; an innermost sanctuary, as a more modern writer terms it, a secret cabinet, where the Holy Trinity dwells blessedly, in the very centre of our nature, up from whose secret recesses joys shall one day break and flow, such as we never dreamed of, such as would look to us now far beyond our possibilities.

Let us state the case of one who experienced this spiritual condition, a great servant of God in the seventeenth century. If his words seem strange at first, let us nevertheless read them carefully, and then mark who the man was who was able to lay before the director of his conscience such a description of his interior dispositions.

"I have generally within me," so he writes, "an experimental realization and a plenitude of the presence of the Most Holy Trinity. . . . All things are blotted out of my mind as soon as they are done ; nothing remains except God. . . . I possess the Most Blessed Trinity with a plenitude of truth and of light, and that with so simple and so strong a view in the superior part of the mind, that I am in no way distracted thereby from my external avocations."

In the last year of his mortal life he declared positively that the sole application of his mind was to the Most Holy Trinity ; that his soul was very intimately united to the Three Divine Persons, from Whom he received illuminations

surpassing human intelligence ; that he lived a life of perpetual retirement and enclosure with the Son of God in the bosom of the Father, where this Divine Son was his life, his light, and his love, and the Holy Spirit his guidance, his sanctification, and his perseverance ; that he bore within him the kingdom of God by reason of the vision and supernatural knowledge of the Most Blessed Trinity communicated to him, and by the pure love with which he felt himself burn, and which transformed him into God, in Whom he possessed a joy and peace transcending all sense.

In this state he passed the last year of his life ; no spiritual change came over him after he reached this term ; and once he used this remarkable expression, that when a person was called to this state, he ought to remain therein, and not change any more. The only change which took place in him was one of advance, a daily progress in perfection.

We have dwelt long upon this matter, on this great feast-day of the Church, because it seems to us that we do not realize as we ought the possibilities of joy that lie within reach of us, if we would only become wholly one with the One God ; nor do we consider as we ought how dear, how most dear, the devotion to the Holy Trinity is, the oldest of all mysteries, and queen supreme of all. Yet who was this man of the seventeenth century, to whom this devotion became his very life's life ? Was he a monk, a priest, a hermit, a martyr ?

This man was a courtier, a soldier, a baron of France ; a devoted husband, the father of several children ; watchful over his household and the men in his employ ; busied with his estates, his building of churches ; loved, honored, besieged for advice and aid by night and day ; rejoicing to conform himself to all the usages, and partake in all the exercises, of our holy Mother the Catholic Church, the fruitful Mother of Saints ; a man with the deepest reverence for

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priests and religious, and an overflowing tenderness for the suffering and the poor.

In the gay city of Paris, in the prime of his manly and Christian life, this great French baron gave up his soul to God, being not quite thirty-eight years of age. To his wife he said: "I recommend the poor to you. Will you not take care of them? You will do it better than I; and never fear; whatever you may give will not diminish what remains." To his children he said: "I pray God to grant you His blessing, and to preserve you by His grace from the malice of the world, that you may have no part in it; and above all, my children, that you may live in the fear and love of God, and obey your mother." To an intimate friend, a nobleman high in authority, he spoke thus: "The perfection of Christian life is to be perfectly united to God in the faith of His Church, and we must not concern ourselves with novelties. Let us be faithful to Him to the end; let us attach ourselves to a God crucified for our salvation." After receiving Holy Communion, he was profoundly silent, then cried in deepest humility: "My God! my God! pardon me; I am a great sinner"; and uttering again and again the Holy Name of Jesus, he calmly died.

What hinders you and me from being like him?

THY BROTHER

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE Athanasian Creed has been called one of those great gifts of God which stand alone in their own orders. Likewise, and transcendently, does Trinity Sunday stand by itself, unique, unparalleled. It carries us away from all that is created, into that dread eternity when time

and man were not ; before ever the morning stars sang together, or the sons of God shouted for joy ; that mysterious epoch—if we may dare to call it so—when God alone existed, all-sufficient to Himself, immutable, three Divine Persons in one majestic Godhead, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, God Almighty, God alone !

We might suppose that Trinity Sunday would bring us less food than usual for practical thought, but on reflection we find it to be full of instruction. Listen :—

“There is one Person of the Father, and another Person of the Son, and another Person of the Holy Ghost ; but the Godhead of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost is one, Their glory equal, Their majesty co-eternal.”

Place before your mind, secondly, our dear Lord's words in His great prayer before His Passion.

“And now I am no more in the world ; and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me : *that they may be one, as We also are.* . . .

“And not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in Me :

“*That they all may be one*, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”

Consider next that the gospel for the first Sunday after Pentecost, which coincides with Trinity Sunday, is full of lessons on charity towards our neighbor ; and then judge if this feast, seemingly exalted above all created things whatsoever, is not both tender and approachable in its majesty, and most instructive for our daily conduct.

Yet how shall we put its blessed teaching into practice ? That brutal, insolent, unrepentant man ; that woman, flaunting, fallen, and bold ; that child sin-branded from birth, and sin-defiled already :—must we, nay, can we, love these ?

We are so made — or so marred — we children of Adam, that, as a late writer has remarked with keen insight, supposing, even among the best of us, every defect were remedied, even then the mere diversity of minds and of characters would suffice to account for collisions; and the difference or the inequality of education is a source of most irritating shocks and of very many most delicate trials. We well know how at times a mere word mispronounced, or a mannerism that to us seems to savor of affectation, grates on the nerves like a discord in music; while such terrible events as the French Revolution and the execution of the saintly Madame Elisabeth may reckon among their remote causes the misunderstanding produced between two classes of society by things which appear to one class the mere petty details of every-day life, too commonplace to be commented upon by or explained to the other.

In the natural relations of fallen mankind, such love and union as our Lord desired for us is indeed impossible. Only by the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit can such a state be brought about. And even granting the possibility, we might ask in dismay how it can be done.

There are three divine methods: *faith*, which, in each soul, however rude, however vile, sees, beneath the hideous defilement, the God to Whose image that miserable sinner primarily was made; *hope*, which against hope holds firmly that, while life lasts, the sinner may yet rise higher than the angels, far higher than we, who in our secret souls know ourselves capable of falling as low as he — or lower; *love*, God-given, yea, born of God, which remembers, with the courtly, high-bred St. Francis, that this brother of ours, so despicable, so irritating and so repellant to us, was “so beautiful in the eyes of God, that the Divine Lover of souls died for the love of him.”

In the days of St. Anthony of Padua there lived a certain man of evil life, to whom the saint, on meeting him, was wont to pay marked signs of reverence. One day, in exasperation, the man turned threateningly upon him; but Anthony humbly said: "Shall I not do all possible honor to you, who, as I know by revelation from Him, shall one day die a martyr of our Lord Jesus Christ? I beseech you, when that glorious day shall come, remember me, a sinner, in your prayer." The man laughed in derision, but the words proved true.

A story is told also of a saint of more ancient days, Paphnutius by name, who for many years had served God in prayer and penance in the desert, and who with all humility asked his righteous Master at last to whom on earth he was equal in his hard-won holiness. For answer, God showed him a piper in an Egyptian tavern, piping to please the guests.

Let us work for God and love Him to our utmost. He is indeed worthy of it; and the very nobility still inherent in our fallen nature should teach us to lavish our all at His feet with chivalrous delight. But let us beware how we scorn the meanest, most besotted, most sinful soul. Instead, let us crave of God the grace to love the Divinity surely there, though hidden from sight.

For, one day, there will stand before us in the judgment many a Magdalen and Margaret of Cortona, pure as life-consecrated virgins; many a man that was a murderer and a robber, snatched from the gibbet to the Heart of Jesus; many an Augustine, his every magnificent gift once dragged in the mire, and then re-gathered and transformed to the likeness of the cherubim. And while we gaze at them in awe and veneration, a tender voice will say to those who throughout life have striven faithfully: —

"Son! thou art always with Me; and all I have is thine.

But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad ; for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again ; he was lost, and is found."

THE UNION OF LOVE

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

"**I**N truth," writes Father Faber, "the mystery of the Holy Trinity should be spoken of with tears rather than with words. We believe, yet we cannot describe. We adore, yet we can never comprehend. Multiply our understandings beyond all human calculations, and our affections beyond all that we can imagine of angelic love, and changed as we should be, the great mystery still remains as far from being comprehended as ever. Nay, it is just all this which makes the Most Holy Trinity a mystery of such indescribable tenderness. At once, and in the face of this august mystery, we are children, happy, hushed, and awe-stricken. The very Church amazes us by the child-like character of her offices on this feast, by her constant, simple cry, all day long, of *O Beata Trinitas ! O Beata Trinitas !*"

In our heart of hearts our passionate longing is for union, for unity, for love. And following close upon Trinity Sunday, on the next Thursday, comes the feast of Corpus Christi, to show us how the desire of our hearts is to be obtained. The Blessed Sacrament unites us to the Blessed Trinity.

What pen or tongue of man can describe that beauty and that joy ! The Canticle of Canticles fall short, and St. Gertrude's marvellous Spiritual Exercises are not sufficient, although it has been said of them : "Some persons

may even be scandalized with the passionate language in which she pours out her soul before the Saviour of men. In the Old Testament and in the New, God has condescended to call Himself the Bridegroom and Spouse of the soul. Is it so surprising that the soul should believe His word, and act upon it? that the heart, wounded and pierced with love of His infinite beauty, should exhaust the utmost tenderness that heart of man can feel, or tongue of man utter?"

We may think of the Judge and of the Judgment and of the terrors of eternal hell; we may cry out in an ecstasy of horror at the enormities of which human nature is capable. Nevertheless, triumphing over all, are these magnificent truths, — first, that God loves man; and second, — mark it well, and the words are those of a noted Bishop: "The special characteristic is that this love for us has at once all that individuality, that ardor, and that tenderness, which constitute the love of a Bridegroom. *The Infinite Beauty has for each man a Spousal love.* Nothing can, like this, clearly reveal to us the absolute power of love; for, from the indubitable fact of which we are speaking, it seems to result that, even in God, love is dominant over all."

So, in His divinest sacrament, He gives Himself, He unites Himself, — our God, our Love, our All, — to us sinful men. Take all loves that ever have been, the love of Adam for Eve ere her beguiling tongue charmed him away from Paradise; the love of Jacob serving seven years for Rachel, years that seemed but days for the love he bore her; the love of Joseph for Mary, and of Mary for Joseph, concerning whom the Carmelite writer, Raffaello Maria, has said that "the Holy Ghost who resided in both of them was their conjugal love"; the love in modern days of Albert and Alexandrine, that pattern of Christian tenderness. The love of God for your soul and mine is deeper, tenderer,

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truer than all these. In the Blessed Sacrament, on this feast of Corpus Christi, He comes, Friend, Lover, Spouse, unto His own.

“ When the storm was in the sky,
And the West was black with showers,
My Beloved came by,
With His hands full of flowers —
Red burning flowers,
Like flame that pulsed and throbbd —
And beyond, in the rain-smitten bowers,
The turtle-dove sobbed.

“ (Sweet in the rough weather
The voice of the turtle-dove —
‘ Beautiful altogether
Is my Love.
His hands are open spread for love,
And full of jacinth stones.
As the apple-tree among trees of the grove
Is He among the sons.’)

“ When the night was in the sky,
And heavily went the hours,
My Beloved drew nigh,
With His hands full of flowers —
Burning red flowers
Like cups of scented wine —
And He said, ‘ They are all ours,
Thine and Mine.

“ ‘ I gathered them from the bitter Tree —
Why dost thou start ?
I gathered the Five of them for thee,
Child of My Heart.
These are they that have wrung My Heart,
And with sharpest pangs have moved Me.
I gathered them — why dost thou shrink apart ?
In the house of them that loved Me.’

" (Sweet through the rain-swept blast
The moan of the turtle-dove —
' You that see Him go past,
Tell Him I languish with love.
Thou hast wounded my heart, O my Love
With but one look of Thine eyes,
While yet the boughs are naked above,
And winter is in the skies.')

" 'Honey-laden flowers
For the children nursed on the knee,
Who sow not bramble among the bowers,
But what (saith He) for thee?
Not bowers of bloom for thee,
Not lily, no, nor rose.
For thee the bloom of the bitter Tree,
More fair than aught that grows.'

" (The voice of the turtle-dove —
' How shall my love be fed,
When the winter is over and gone,
And all its storms are fled!
When all its storms are fled,
How all His gifts shall grace me,
When His left hand is under my head,
And His right hand doth embrace me.')

" O thou Fount of everlasting light ! " cries St. Gertrude,
" draw me away to Thee, into the ocean of Thy divine
essence, whence came forth the word which spoke me into
being. There shall I know even as I am known, and love
even as I am loved ; and I shall see Thee, O my God ! see
Thee as Thou art, with a clear vision, a gladness, and a
possession, which will be my bliss forevermore."

VOCATION

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE sweetness, the delight, of a true religious vocation is beyond any joy the world can offer. They to whom it is granted may say with the introit for the Second Sunday after Pentecost: "The Lord became my protector, and He brought me forth into a large place."

An intelligent Protestant once remarked to a Catholic friend that she supposed almost all Sisters had met with some great trial or disappointment, which had led them to seek the shelter of the convent. Her friend replied in the negative, and tried to explain the matter; but it is probable that the words had not one tithe the effect that was produced by the bright sweet face of a young Sister who certainly looked anything but sorrow-stricken or heart-broken. The Protestant frankly acknowledged that the Sister showed no sign of being attracted to the religious life by the trials of her former days; and the truth was that the words, "Sister of Charity," had rung for years in a maiden's heart like music, and drawn her to that particular community before she had ever seen the white cornette of St. Vincent's daughters.

St. Francis de Sales once remarked shrewdly that if there were a novitiate to the married state, very few would be professed; and certainly, if men knew what deep delight, sweeter indeed than honey and the honeycomb, draws hearts, rejoicing, to the religious state, the number, except for the interposition of the supreme will of God, would be fewer still. To choose that which is mortal, frail, variable, when that which is eternal, strong, and changeless could be ours, and ours forever; to be allured by perishable loveli-

ness, which disease or death can turn to horror, when a beauty ever new, and the Face of the "fairest Fair," smiles at us; to lean on a heart that, one day, may turn and hate us, when the Sacred Heart can be to us Lover and Spouse forever; — what man could do it, who was conscious of what he was doing!

So we speak, forgetting Mme. de Chantal, and Nicholas von der Flûte, and the Baron de Renty, and Venerable Anna Maria Taigi, and our own saintly Garesché, who entered the married state, and lived there holily, and brought up their children in the fear and love of God. This shows us the supreme factor in the problem, God's omniscient will.

Sometimes people say that they cannot enter the religious state, because they are not good enough. The thought of God's will settles that matter, once for all. God will not tell us to do what He will not give us strength to do.

Not many years ago, — for we count his great soul among those which make the just past century noble, — there dwelt in Naples a certain man, Antonio Maria Massa by name, who married a woman of great soul like to his; and to them God gave nine children, five sons and four daughters. When each child was born, the noble father used to cast himself on his knees before his God, and beg of Him to make them, — not wealthy or learned, albeit their blood was noble, — but, *to make them saints*.

God took him at his word without reserve. The four daughters became nuns. The five sons became Jesuits. With the full and free permission of their parents (mark this well), they went their way. And more — the five sons went to the mission-field of China.

One son died, a victim to plague and famine, and to his ardent love for his plague-stricken flock. One died, worn out by work among his converts, and by a divine malady,

called by a loving disciple, "consumption of the hunger and desire of seeing the great God." One, a novice at sixteen, a model of piety, fervor, modesty, and self-denial, chose and was sent to the missions; was dragged by the hair, and ill-treated; then, patiently and uncomplainingly, began work and hardship once more, till, worn out, he sank beneath his burden, and went to his reward. The other brothers *had the honor*, so their story tells us, the one of being scourged for Christ, the other of winning a martyr's death for Him.

It is a grand record, worthy of the days of the first Christians. But, as we think of it, we ask ourselves which will wear the brightest crown in heaven, the children who won the palm of saints and martyrs, or the parents who begged of God to make their children saints?

They would answer, could they speak to us, that God alone could tell; for each of them, simply and solely, strove to do His will. And to them this seemed, believe it, the ordinary rule of life. When the mother, then a widow, brought her youngest boy to the Jesuit provincial, to give him up to God's service, she had nothing to say of heroism or reward, though her mother-heart was bleeding. "Louis is called, I am sure," she said. "God wills it. Shall I dare to oppose the will of God? No, never! This evening, if it please you, I myself will conduct him to your novitiate."

God wills it. There lies the key to every problem, and would that we all possessed it! Then no longer would romance or sentiment or ambition influence our young people in the choice of their state in life. And no longer, then, would parents hold back their children, when God called them to His special service, whether to the priesthood, the cloister, the missions, or to a life in the world, yet entirely set apart for Him. "God wills it," they would

say. "Shall I dare oppose Him? Oh, never." And they would deem it, not their honor only, but something sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, when their children went forth, rejoicing, to offer their life and their life-blood to their King.

THE HEART OF JESUS PLEADING

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON this third Sunday after Pentecost, in the touching parables of the lost sheep and the lost piece of silver, the gospel for the day displays to us the intense and inveterate craving of the Redeemer's Heart for the souls of sinful men. The artist's brush has drawn for us the picture of the woman sweeping diligently her floor by the light of her little lamp, to find the small lost coin; and the poet has told us: "The lost piece of money He will seek for *and find*." We have pictures, also, of the Good Shepherd, going forth into storm and darkness, by rough ways and through thorny thickets, stooping pityingly, and all-forgetful of self, to lift with bleeding hands the straying sheep to safety on His bosom, and bear it to the fold. These are only faint forth-shadowings of the hunger and thirst of the Heart of Jesus after the souls of men, ever felt and ever expressed in the League of the Sacred Heart by the motto which is the watchword of its members: "Thy kingdom come."

There is a method of studying the life of our Blessed Lord which has peculiar interest for devout and reflective minds; the consideration, namely, of His "interior dispositions," as they are called, His motives, wishes, aims, plans, and loves. The prayerful student of these matters must quickly discover that the glory of God, and His most holy will,

together with the salvation and sanctification of souls, were objects that Our Lord and Master kept ever before Him in His earthly career. Yet, during the first thirty years of His mortal life, what was His way of carrying them into effect?

Referring again to His outward life, we look at the Babe in Bethlehem, and the Child in Egypt, the Boy in Nazareth, the Young Man in the carpenter's shop, the Worshipper in the synagogue. We picture to ourselves that face with its heavenly expression; we picture to ourselves that dear Redeemer as we would fain have met Him, have spoken with Him, have worked and prayed beside Him. Yet, when all this is done to our best and utmost, we find that there is something we desire far more than to see and speak with Him. We want to know His thoughts, His Heart, His Sacred Heart. And so we approach that school of knowledge in the Church, governed by no less a teacher than the Holy Ghost Himself, wherein the mystics are taught how to teach us these inner things that possess such special charm.

The first Christian mystic was none other than Mary, the Virgin Mother of Christ.

"She only knew Him, she alone
Who nightly to His cradle crept;
And, lying like the moonbeam prone,
Worshipped her Maker while He slept."

She held His beating Heart to her heart; He drew His human life from hers; the lovelight of His eyes first dwelt on her; His first low word — that wondrous first word of the eternal Word of God — was spoken in her hearing, and thrilled her with a sweetness beyond all possible songs in heaven. The brush of Murillo has shown us the longing in the Child's eyes for His Heavenly Father; the brush of Raphael has shown His intense, world-wide, longing vision

of the myriad souls of men. If genius, illumined by faith and prayer and love, saw this, certainly Mary the Mother saw deeper and saw more.

She saw the prophets' dreams fulfilled. She knew, by angelic announcement, that the world's Redeemer had come; yet she saw Him regarded by their neighbors as only a Hebrew boy among other boys in lowly Nazareth; and she saw the omnipotent Creator working with plane and chisel at the carpenter's trade. But, underneath all, she read His Heart. It was a life of continual prayer and self-oblation, offered to God for souls.

We do not doubt these things in regard to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. But let us follow the Church's history as the centuries pass away. Three hundred years have not fled, since, to one who bore the name of Mary, our Divine Lord appeared, and said to her these memorable words: "Behold this Heart that has so much loved men." She heard Him also say that He wanted "love for love." And now, the League, founded since then to honor that Sacred Heart of Christ, reminds us that there in the tabernacle is the same Lord really Who lay on Mary's breast in Bethlehem, and toiled at Joseph's side in Nazareth, and went after the wandering sheep into the wilderness, and hung dying for us upon the shameful tree on Calvary, crying: "I thirst"; the same Lord Who spoke to Blessed Margaret Mary in the Visitation convent, beseeching us to give Him love for love. Out of the tabernacle does no voice speak to us also in the silence, telling us that Our Lord's Heart is still the same, and that He loves and longs for the hearts and the souls of men?

When we kneel there next before Him, let us for a while forget ourselves and our own special needs; let us lose ourselves in the infinite abysses of that blessed Heart. Only in the darkness, when all earthly lights are vanished from

us, can we hope to see that thorn-encircled, cross-crowned, and fiery Heart of love. Ever peacefully athirst now for souls It beats there, pleading with us : "Satisfy My Heart ! Satisfy — satisfy My Heart, that bled and broke for you !"

What reply shall we make to It but that strong cry of the League, unceasingly repeated now the wide world over : "Thy kingdom come, Lord Jesus ! Thy kingdom come !"

Let us indeed cease thinking what we want, and think what He wants. He wants neither wealth nor fame nor worldly success. He wants our love, our loving, faithful, holy hearts ; and He wants to have the lost and wandering sheep brought back to His blessed fold. How is it that we can set our minds on lesser things, that must pass away like smoke, yet we dare to weigh them in the balance with immortal souls and the thirst of Jesus Christ ? Alas ! I know not. We could help Him — we, poor abject beings, could help Almighty God to win souls to His yearning Heart. Is it possible that it shall ever be said of us that we would not ? Shall it be said that we went on choosing selfishly to please ourselves, when, of our great Exemplar and our Saviour, an apostle, inspired by the Holy Ghost, tells us : "Christ pleased not Himself."

TWO LESSONS OF THE HEART

THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART

THE month of the Sacred Heart is come. The Friday following the Octave of Corpus Christi is the great feast of the Sacred Heart. The month of June, the month of roses and of marriage feasts, has been set apart for this devotion, peculiar to the Catholic Church. Whence arose the devotion ? Who first recommended it ? Our Blessed

Lord Himself. "Learn of Me," He says, "because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls."

Learn of Me. What great things might we not expect to learn of Him Who is Wisdom essentially, and Light of light, and from Whom no secrets are hid? Yet, how simple it is! "Learn of Me; because *I am meek and humble of heart.*"

A remarkable prayer in the *Raccolta* is worth dwelling upon in this connection. It begins: "Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist, sweet Companion of our exile, I adore Thee. Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, I adore Thee."

Does it go on next in a chant of ecstatic praise as in the exultant hymn of triumph: —

"Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne!
Hark how the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him Who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity."

Are we led then to think of Him as surrounded by multitudes of loyal servants, rejoicing to be able to lavish life and love on such a leader?

No! "Solitary Heart, humiliated Heart, I adore Thee. Abandoned Heart, forgotten Heart, I adore Thee. Despised Heart, outraged Heart, I adore Thee. Heart unknown by men, I adore Thee."

So the prayer goes on; and this is the history of man's treatment of the Incarnate God. Yet how wonderful His love for us is! "Heart, loving our hearts, — Heart desiring to be loved, — patient in waiting for us, — eager to grant our request, — wishing to speak to our souls, — Heart

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of Him Who sleeps yet ever watches, — Heart teaching the secrets of divine union, — have mercy on us.”

Each clause furnishes food for a whole meditation. Let us take one alone to-day: — “Heart teaching the secrets of divine union.”

More than two hundred years ago, when our Blessed Lord appeared to the humble Visitation nun named Margaret Mary Alacoque, He told her of His ardent desire that men should return to Him love for love, and should pay honor and worship to His Heart. And He showed to her that Sacred Heart that had been pierced deep by a cruel spear; thorns surrounded it, flames burst hotly from its summit where a cross was planted. This was to be the place of her repose. Here, too, in brief, are the secrets of the union which the Sacred Heart reveals to us, — pain and love.

If we would but regard it thus! When pain and anguish come, if we would only remember that the way of the cross is the King’s highway! There He has gone before us, with torn and bleeding feet, aching head and broken heart. So He went on, to His glory and to His crown. So He went back to that old, unbroken, never-to-be-broken, divine union of the majestic Godhead, which the Incarnation and even the dereliction upon Calvary had only seemed to break.

On each of us is laid a burden, and its pressure is often very hard to bear. Let us look at the Sacred Heart. It is a human heart, this Heart of the Man-God. One simple yet grand lesson it teaches us for the bearing of all pain. Ponder it well in its marvellous simplicity: “Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.”

He does not tell us that He is strong to endure pain, though His was more by far than the strength of a giant rejoicing to run his course. He does not set before us His absolute loyalty and self-sacrifice, although, from the very

beginning of His existence, He could say without reserve : "I come to do Thy will, O God." No, it is the meek, humble, human temper of His mighty and adorable heart that is its intimate and perfect lesson for our proud, ambitious souls.

May God help us to learn it well ! When the next blow falls heavily, let us look up gently and patiently through our tears to the stricken Heart of Him Who bore our suffering long ago, in with all the rest of His untold weight of pain. No murmurs, no rebellion. Only the sweet, dear will of God. This leads us into such secrets of the divine union as have fashioned, through the ages, both the known and the hidden saints.

This — and the love. A love meek and humble also, yet aflame with the Holy Spirit's fires. A love that grows to prize even the pain, because God sends it ; a love that the very naming of God's name wakes into singing ; a love that runs and is not weary, walks and does not faint. Yes, more than this. A love that can serve long years, and then enter into an agony like our Lord's — if we may venture to say it ; — and still love on to the end, unflinching, with the cry ever on its lips : "Though He should kill me, I will trust in Him" ; a love that sees ever the wound in the Sacred Heart and the thorns that encompass it, and understands that each cross is a spiritual communion, and that the prize will far outweigh the pain.

These are some slight lessons of the Sacred Heart's teaching. May His Holy Spirit give us grace to ponder them well.

THE SACRED HEART'S DESIRE

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE gospel for the fourth Sunday after Pentecost narrates the story of the miraculous draught of fishes. Our Lord beheld two boats beside the lake of Genesareth, and He entered one of them, which was Simon's. After teaching the crowds on shore a while from this singular pulpit, He bade Simon put off into the deep and let down his nets. All night the men in that boat had toiled in vain, yet they obeyed the Master's word; and lo, they enclosed in their net a great multitude of fishes, and their net was breaking. So they beckoned to their partners in the other ship to come and help them, and "they filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking." Then Simon Peter, the impulsive and the loving, fell at Jesus' feet, and cried in awe: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" But the merciful Saviour answered him: "Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Then Simon and his partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, having brought their ships to shore, left all things and followed Jesus Christ, Who was indeed to be forevermore their All.

The craving of the Master's Heart is for unity and love. To united effort, to united prayer, all things are promised. If Simon Peter's partners had refused to come at his beckoning, what loss, both for time and for eternity, would have been theirs! For Simon, with the Master on board, there was nothing to dread. By one syllable from Christ's divine lips, by one glance from His wonderful eyes, by one masterful sign over the watery elements, the swarming denizens of the sea, which His creative power had called into being,

would have been submissive to Peter's hand alone. But the Lord of love desired the strength of union and the edification of mutual love in His true Church.

The days passed by, days that must often have seemed to those only half-illuminated men like some mysterious dream. They ate and drank with the Master; they heard Him tell His simple yet profound parables to the multitude; and then, in more familiar communications, they listened while He expounded plainly the word to themselves alone. They watched the light in His eye, the light that bespoke a heavenly vision always before Him, though veiled from them. They marked His pitiful compassion for the sinner, His charity to the sick and sorrowful, His love for little children. We cannot doubt that they must have grown more hungry to understand Him, the longer they knew Him; for the deeper they saw into the depths of His Sacred Heart, the more they must have comprehended that beyond lay deeper depths of power and wisdom and beauty and unfathomable love, which shall bless with inexpressible and unending delight the favored souls that shall enter farthest into those infinite abysses of the Heart of God.

It will be one of the endless joys of an endless heaven to study the Heart of Jesus Christ. Yet it is a study that we, like the apostles, must begin on earth. And to us as to them was one special revelation made, in those last momentous hours when the shadows of the coming death-agony lay dark and long about the Master's path. St. John, the beloved disciple, who lay on the Heart of Jesus at the Last Supper in the upper room at Jerusalem, has kept for us in his gospel the blessed words that interpret to us the final yearnings of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Let us, in the quiet of the June hours that we consecrate voluntarily to the study and worship of that Heart that so loved men, listen adoringly to those recorded words.

"Remain in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine ; so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. Holy Father," He prays, " keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me : that they may be one, as We also are. And not for them only do I pray, but for those also who, through their word, shall believe in Me : that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

We turn to the epistle of to-day. It is that vivid description of St. Paul, wherein he shows to us every creature groaning and travailing in pain till now, waiting for its deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Blind and ignorant though it be, the world is still crying out of its darkness and its intolerable anguish for help and light and love. Still St. Peter's bark is on the sea, and the Master is in it and with it, and the nets are full so that they begin to break. But when now the voice of Peter speaks, as it so often and earnestly and lovingly speaks, to men who call themselves Christians, to come and help in the Master's work, they choose instead to abide in their own places and work in their own ways, distinctly apart from the centre of unity and the Master's chosen ship. The month of June is the month for earnest prayer that we all may soon be one, for this is our Lord's own device to obtain the answer to the great petition of the League : "Thy kingdom come, O Lord ! Thy kingdom come !"

THE SYMPATHY OF THE SAINTS

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

A VERY charming book might easily be written, and do much good, on the subject of the sympathy of the saints, and it needs to be written just now. It might have for its motto St. Peter's words in to-day's epistle: —

“Dearly beloved: be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, loving the brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble.”

Some writers put before us very austere the dangers of human sympathy, human friendship, human love. They warn us to keep our souls empty of anything which may come between us and our Creator, and declare to us the difficulty of giving to Him the first place unless we banish from our minds earthly interests, worldly ties, and all created things. And they speak the truth, in a measure, as they see life and its dangers. But there is another side to this question, and it is suggested by the collect for to-day: —

“O God Who hast prepared for those who love Thee good things beyond the vision of man: pour into our hearts such love towards Thee that we, loving Thee in all things and above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire.”

Any one of us who learns to love his neighbor in God has the key to the secret of the saints' sympathy with their fellows and of their warm and openly expressed affection. In a character like St. Francis de Sales, who did not endeavor so much to change his nature as to supernaturalize his nature, we with our cold and timid hearts are sometimes almost startled by the impetuous strength and fearlessness

of his language. He is not afraid to love, — this saint of Geneva who so ardently loved, first of all, his God. The first words his childish lips ever spoke were these: "God and my mother love me well"; and in his youth, when strangely assailed by that almost overwhelming temptation to despair, so memorable in his spiritual experience, his loyal prayer in the height of his torture was, that if he must indeed be separated from God forever, he might at least love Him with all his heart during his life.

When sunshine flooded his soul again, it was such a sunshine as the annals of the Church have seldom painted for us, — such brightness, joy, peace, love, that one is driven to exclaim: "These things then are possible; and many yet may know in their own experience what once has been felt already, by the grace of God." One turns sometimes from the wonderful clearness but stern severity of St. John of the Cross, to take refuge in the more than motherly love of St. Francis' guidance; and while we know the grave reasons for St. John's warnings, and the need of his austere instructions, we nevertheless maintain that "the heart has its reasons which the reason cannot feel," and we are sure that sweetness and joy underlie, permeate, and absolutely dominate suffering and self-mortification: for Love shall be Lord of all.

Is not our Blessed Lord craving our human sympathy, asking our human affection, He Who is God, and needs us not, and is all-sufficient to Himself? "What are these wounds in Thy hands?" we ask Him; and the sorrowful answer is: "Those wherewith I was wounded in the house of My friends." In the revelations to Blessed Margaret Mary, we become aware that the Sacred Heart desires love, sympathy, companionship; and we are daily praying: "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine."

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You remember how the Douglas swore to Robert Bruce, when the king was dying, that he would faithfully carry his heart in the wars, and fight to the death on his behalf against the enemies of Christ's name? He kept his word, and when he met the Saracens, he flung that treasured heart of his royal master into the thick of the fight, crying: "Press forward, brave heart! as thou wert wont to do, and Douglas will follow thee or die." The incident has been beautifully applied to the devotion to the Sacred Heart in the following lines: —

"Press forward as Thy wont,
Heart of my King!
Though, all around Thee, sounds
Of strife may ring:
Though in the battle's heat
Thy path may be,
Lead where Thou wilt, and I
Will follow Thee.

"Striving beneath Thine eye,
My King, my God!
Treading the footprints where
Thy feet have trod;
Thy banner-cross in view,
Thyself so near,
No shrinking can be mine,
No thought of fear.

"Wearied and pale art Thou,
All scarred with blows,
And forth from many a wound
The life-blood flows;
Thy Heart so true and strong
Has loved me so,
Thou hast not spared Thy life
To crush my Foe.

"Then, O, for love like Thine,
As deep and wide;
Courage to follow Thee
Close to Thy side!

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Faithful to Thee in life,
True to Thy call,
Beneath Thy banner's shade
At length to fall.

"To fall beside my King!
O joy, to feel
My love for Thee is sealed
With death's strong seal!
Clasped in Thy loving arms,
No more to part,
Calmly to fall asleep
On Thy pierced Heart!"

You ask the connection of these lines with the subject of our thoughts? Is it difficult to see? It seems to me that the men who follow that Leader must love each other as brothers at arms in the same battle; as friends bound by a common interest, feeling the same heart-throb; as true soldiers and faithful comrades, —

"Bearing each other's sorrows,
Sharing each other's joys."

It is a need-be, a must-be, the tie formed under the flag of our great Captain, and made strong by the union with the Sacred Heart of Him Who has gone before us into the battle, and Whom we will follow unto death.

A PROOF OF THE REAL PRESENCE

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THAT great miracle which forms the subject of the gospel for the sixth Sunday after Pentecost is regarded as a type of the Blessed Sacrament, the divine feast in which the soul is fed with the very Body and Blood of our Lord and God. Many have been the learned books,

sermons, and essays that have been written in proof of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ upon the altar through the great and ever renewed miracle of Transubstantiation; but there is another proof which has perhaps equal force in its own way, namely the marked and extraordinary effect of that great sacrament upon the children of the Catholic Church. For love of that Divine Presence they will spend hours before it, rapt in a joy beyond their power to describe; and they know that this happiness comes from something exterior to themselves, from that unseen but ever abiding Presence in the tabernacle, the most real, the most wonderful, the most exalted of all created things, the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Father Faber, in his grand work on the Blessed Sacrament, gives instances of its marvellous power, as narrated below.

The great German writer on mystical theology, Görres, he says, tells of those who could feel the Blessed Sacrament, taste, hear, smell, touch, and see it. St. Francis Borgia, for example, could enter a church where no light, no sign, betrayed the altar where the Sacred Host was reserved, and yet he would go directly there, drawn by the magnet of Its love. St. Philip Neri once saw our Lord at Exposition, giving His blessing to the faithful throng before Him. Father Surin found in the Holy Eucharist a supernatural taste. Nicholas de Flüe, in his hermit life, lived only on the Eucharist; and he said that when he heard Mass or received Holy Communion, he felt a strength and sweetness which sufficed instead of natural food. The sight of the Sacred Host, or even of a priest who had just said Mass, gave to St. Catherine of Siena "incredible strength," so that, although previously almost fainting with exhaustion, she would become able to accomplish easily most painful works of charity. In like manner, St. Rose of Lima was

made strong by the reception of Holy Communion, and was so filled with that divine food that she wanted nothing else, and once passed eight days without eating. Moreover, at the Forty Hours' Adoration she would spend the whole time kneeling, in her angelic worship of her Lord. For twelve years, the Holy Eucharist was St. Angela of Foligno's only food ; it was the only sustenance in Lent of Domenica del Paradiso ; St. Peter of Alcantara, the great Franciscan confessor of St. Teresa, lived for years upon the Eucharist. Do we wonder? Ah! what is impossible to Him Who multiplied the loaves and fishes, created a universe out of nothing, and from the very stones of the earth has power to raise up children unto Abraham?

The beggar-saint of a century ago, whom Pope Leo XIII. has canonized as St. Benedict Joseph Labre, would adore for hours, motionless before the Blessed Sacrament ; and as he prayed, the roseate color of seraphic joy and love would creep over his pallid countenance, and he would be as one transfixed and deluged with ecstatic delight. Once Mary of Oignies prayed for a certain priest, who in his gratitude said Mass for her. "This Mass was for me," she said. Amazed, he asked how she knew that, to which she replied : "I saw a dove descend on your head at the altar, and extend its wings towards me ; and I understood it to be the Holy Ghost bringing the fruits of the Mass."

We have touched the key to the whole mystery here. Exterior to ourselves is the Real Presence of Jesus ; before Him are our souls, the souls of those He died to save, and for whom His Sacred Heart broke in its passion of pain and love. One thing He asks in return, the union of the soul with Him ; and the doctor of mystical theology has told us that the Holy Ghost is the author of this divine union between the soul and its eternal Lover, and that the Holy Ghost awakeneth love.

Here lies the explanation of the mysteries of holiness and spirituality to be found everywhere in the Catholic Church. In the century just past, the ecstasies, Maria Mörl, Anne Catherine Emmerich, Louise Lateau, were witnesses to it in a very marked degree ; and we are told that the line of such witnesses has never failed, but that these Catholics who emphatically show forth in their own persons the love and the Passion of Christ are to be found somewhere through all time in that wonderful Church where the line of St. Peter also never ceases, and the Divine Presence abides with us all days to the end of the world. These are proofs of the true fold of Christ, evidence incontrovertible that He Who feasted four thousand persons on seven loaves and a few fishes, and behold ! seven baskets full of fragments remained after all those men were fed, still works His marvellous work. Still the faithful Catholics who feast at His banquet, cry : " This is, of a truth, the Prophet Who is to come into the world " ; and still they exclaim triumphantly : " We are not children of the bondmaid, but of the free woman."

BY THEIR FRUITS

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

A MODERN French writer, the Count de Falloux, has said, in speaking of religious communities established outside the Catholic Church : "*Hors de nous, la persévérance, la fécondité, la perfection, ne se rencontrent pas.*" That is to say : " Apart from us, perseverance, abundance, and perfection are not to be found." On this Sunday, when we read in the gospel, " By their fruits ye shall know them," let us examine these three combined features of the Church.

First, perseverance. As to this mark, the learned author of "The Convents of the United Kingdom" strikingly says: "The year 529 saw St. Benedict establish his institute on Monte Cassino. In the thirteen centuries that have since elapsed, great dynasties have risen and passed away; mighty kingdoms have been founded, have flourished and decayed; the map of Europe has been again and again blotted out and re-written; but, amidst the fall of dynasties and the wreck of thrones, this association of humble monks has survived; and, powerful in its moral height and influence for good, gives promise of enduring for many generations. In this respect they strikingly contrast with mere human institutions."

The Carmelites claim the honor of being the oldest order known, with no less a founder than the prophet Elias. Their first clear and extended rule, however, dates from 1207. In 1085 arose the Carthusians; in 1098, the Cistercians; in 1209, the Franciscans; in 1215, the Dominicans; in 1223, the Servites. These are some of the older orders, and they exist to our day. Compared with them, the Jesuits are young, dating only from 1540; so, too, the Oratorians, from 1564; the Lazarists, from 1625; the Sulpicians, from 1642; all old enough, however, and all proclaiming the same distinguishing characteristic of their Mother, the Catholic Church, — stability, perseverance, length of years.

The women too. In the year 529 St. Scholastica, St. Benedict's sister, founded a nunnery in Italy. Thirteen centuries, and half a century more, sped by; and, in the year 1873, there were eight convents of Benedictine nuns in England, and a colony of them had reached the United States. In the year 423, St. Augustine formed a set of rules for a community in Africa, of which his widowed sister was the first abbess. Again the centuries, fourteen hundred years and more, have fled, and Augustinian nuns conduct

St. George's Retreat in England for the care of mental maladies ; while the missionary fathers, who call St. Augustine their patron, have done a work, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the full grandeur of which the slow justice of time will yet unveil to the eyes of men.

Who has not heard of the glorious St. Teresa, who, in the sixteenth century, brought back the unmitigated, austere Carmelite rule into strict observance in Spain ? In 1903 there are Carmelite nuns following that rule in Baltimore, New Orleans, St. Louis, Boston, Philadelphia, Montreal ; there are Carmelites in China, and Carmelites in India ; and there are Carmelites in England and Ireland, lands that have clung to this ancient order through the days of persecution and distress.

In the Catholic Church this mark of perseverance, age, stability, is surely to be found.

Second, divine abundance. We will not go back for this to the army of Augustinians, or Dominicans, or Benedictines, or Franciscans ; but to the twenty thousand Sisters of Charity, whose white cornettes are a token of peace and blessing everywhere, in France and in Maryland, in Constantinople and in Madrid, and from England to these Sisters' red field of martyrdom at horrible Cawnpore or in China. Twenty thousand Sisters of Charity — one order only, headed by one leader in the mother-house in Europe, and filled with the spirit of their world-revered founder, Vincent de Paul ! Established in 1666, the Catholic sisters of the Good Shepherd had, in 1873, convents numbering one hundred and eighteen. These sisters are found in France, Italy, Belgium, Prussia, Austria, Holland, Great Britain, Switzerland ; Canada has them, and the States, and Lima, and Quito, and Chili ; the traveller sees their homes and refuges in Ceylon and Australia, in Egypt and India, in Suez and Aden, Port Saïd and Rangoon.

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What shall we say of the Sisters of St. Paul, founded in 1704 in France, swept away at the Revolution, then gathering together again, and numbering two hundred and fifty houses in their mother-country, thirty in England, and several in the West Indies ; possessing establishments also in Hong-Kong, Shanghai, and Cochin China? What of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, born in 1816, and having sisters in France, England, America, Spain, India, even at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains? What of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame, whose foundress was living in 1873, and who have 252 houses in Europe, 248 in America, 2715 sisters in Europe and 2970 in America, 1336 candidates, and 153,325 pupils in their care? What of the Notre Dame Sisters of Namur, who, not content with their glorious work in Europe and America, have gone to the mission fields of Africa, to suffer and to die?

Who can fitly describe that wonderful teaching order of the Sacred Heart, whose venerable foundress saw more than a thousand nuns precede her into heaven, and left many more than a thousand to mourn her loss on earth? What of the Sisters of Mercy, whose new order seemed to flow with the easy grace of a fountain from the mind of God not seventy-five years ago ; and who, before half a century had passed, not only counted their convents one hundred and thirty-three in England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, but had sent communities over the United States and British North America, and to Buenos Ayres, Australia, and New Zealand, while the wounded soldier blessed them in the Crimean hospitals and on the battlefields? To crown all this, though even then but a slight part of the whole story of the Church's marvellous fecundity is told, let us not omit to mention the stupendous growth of that new order of Little Sisters of the Poor, which in thirty-three years numbered one hundred and forty houses, containing two thousand

sisters, and supporting more than twenty thousand aged poor. Again we would ask any fair-minded person : Where lies the sign of spiritual fecundity, of the divine fruitfulness of the true spouses of Christ? Is not the finger of God here?

But for the third mark, holiness, where shall we begin? where end? what shall we say? The ordinary, commonplace, everyday duties of these Catholic nuns and sisters are poverty, chastity, obedience, self-forgetfulness, self-abnegation. What others call heroism is to them duty, love of their neighbor, imitation of their founders, the thing they expect to do, and could do in no other way. What St. Elizabeth of Hungary did to the lepers seven hundred years ago, her Franciscan daughters do to-day to many lepers in plague-haunted Molokai; and in Trinidad the Dominican daughters of St. Catherine of Siena imitate her saintly, heroic charity to the lepers. The Sisters of St. Louis devote themselves to the care of the most corrupt and diseased children, considered incorrigible in other schools. The Sisters of Charity walk calmly into the pest-house, and live there until quarantine is over. And for love of neighbor, consider this simple fact : during the Franco-Prussian war, four hundred sisters — a first detachment — went forth with the French army of the Rhine. At the same time the German king applied to their superior for sisters for the Prussian army, and he was immediately supplied ! Yet all this is but an example of that daily life of sanctity, concerning which we need only say to those outside of the Catholic Church, who ought to be drawn loyally into her blessed fold, the true home of the soul, by these combined and salient features of perseverance, divine fecundity, and sanctity : "By their fruits ye shall know them. Show me Peter, and I will show you the Church."

A ROYAL GIVER

THE SUNDAY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

THE first Sunday in July is the feast of the Most Precious Blood. Let us name them over, those seven blood-sheddings, offered lavishly, unstintedly, by our Divine Redeemer for us sinful men. There is, first, the circumcision of the tender infant flesh, thirty-three long years before the last crimson drop was shed. Then the terrible agony in Gethsemani, when His very sweat was as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground. After that, the fearful scourging, from whose horrors our weak minds, although loving in their very weakness, shrink in amazed distress. Then the crowning of that blessed head with torturing thorns, that royal head where all crowns of the world were due. Then the stripping the garments from the raw and mangled flesh, opening each wound again. Then the piercing of the sharp iron nails through the holy hands that were wasted with fasting and always filled with mercy, and through the feet that had never wearied in seeking after souls. Last, the deep spear-thrust through the Sacred Heart broken for us, and the last, last drop of Precious Blood, given for our worthless souls.

What hast Thou kept back from us, dear Master? Nothing. Behold Thou art dead, with Thy veins drained dry for love of me.

Through all ages, and in this very month of July, on the twenty-second day, the Church holds up before us, as an example of love and devotion, the great penitent, Magdalen. She lavished the priceless ointment on her Saviour's weary and wayworn feet; she bathed them with her tears; covered

them with her kisses ; wiped them with the long tresses of her beautiful hair. But what was her lavish love when compared with His? What, indeed, *is* the love of *God*? We cannot tell it. Earth's loves dwindle before it. Will eternity itself unveil to us completely the interminable depths of this mystery: "God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son!"

Tell me, in all Scripture what do you find more amazing than this? God, all-sufficient, all-beautiful, and needing nothing, so loved man, this nothing, this worse than nothing, this sin-stained, rebellious thing, that He spared not His own Son, His other self, but sent Him down, — whence and whither? From the joys of the Godhead to the seven great blood-sheddings ; from the eternal beauty of holiness to the hideous proximity of the spirits of evil and want and woe. Over and over again, untired and ever amazed, we ought to repeat it, that strong saying of our Lord to St. Catherine of Genoa: "If you knew how I love a soul! But this will be the last thing that you will know in this world ; for to apprehend it would kill you."

What have we done for Him? What is our love for Him?

God help us! Where is our ointment *lavished* upon Him? Where are our kisses, our tears? What shall we say of our love? What have the saints said? St. Elizabeth of Hungary, young, beautiful, a king's daughter, a most tender wife, a mother, hear *her* make answer, to the Lord of love and life, that He is more than all. "Ah, my Lord and my God! may I be all Thine, and Thou all mine! What is this, my God and my All? Thou all mine, and I all Thine. Let me love Thee, my God, above all things, and all other things in Thee." What says St. Francis of Assisi, once the gay young cavalier? "My God and my All! I give to Thee all my heart and my body, and vehemently desire, if I might know how, to do more for Thy

love." What says St. Francis Xavier in his immortal hymn, fit song indeed for lips ransomed by the Precious Blood, fit lines for loyal hearts to keep forever in memory till we join in the new song before the throne?

" My God ! I love Thee, not because
 I hope for heaven thereby,
 Nor because they that love Thee not,
 Must burn eternally.
 Thou, O my Jesu ! Thou didst me
 Upon the cross embrace ;
 For me didst bear the nails, the spear,
 The manifold disgrace ;
 And griefs and torments numberless,
 And sweat of agony ;
 E'en death itself, — and all for one
 Who was Thine enemy.
 Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ !
 Should I not love Thee well,
 Not for the sake of winning heaven
 Or of escaping hell ;
 Not for the hope of gaining aught,
 Not seeking a reward,
But as Thyself hast lovèd me,
 O ever-loving Lord.
 E'en so I love Thee, and will love,
 And in Thy praise will sing,
 Solely because Thou art my God
 And my eternal King."

Thus make answer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus the hearts of His saints, His martyrs, His missionaries, His virgins. So make answer to Him the hidden saints in quiet homes, in hard daily labor, in the anguish of bereavement, borne not only unrepiningly, but gladly, for love of Him, Who shed His heart's last drop of blood for them. But we — ? God pity us ! We stand here, the sons and heirs of the saints and the martyrs, and we count out and grudge to Him, not only our pains and trials and crosses, but the dollars — *the pennies* — asked as a feeble token of our love

for the Saviour, Who bought us at the price of His Most Precious Blood ! In this wretched, mercenary age of ours, we sit in our comfortable homes which He gave us, and have no ointment to *lavish*, thankfully, on Him. We reckon up the money-value of our children's education, present and future, — repine at frequent collections, frequent calls on our purse or time, for Jesus ; and, all the while, who counts the slow drops of the Precious Blood falling for each of us ? and, after all, *what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?*

LED BY THE SPIRIT

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

IN the epistle for the eighth Sunday after Pentecost occur the words : “ Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” They carry our minds back to the scene in St. John's Gospel, where our Lord is talking with Nicodemus, and says to him : “ The Spirit breatheth where He will, and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh, and whither He goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Like links in a chain, come the thoughts of the first Pentecost, — the sound of the rushing wind shaking the house where the Apostles sat, the inspired things they spoke in divers words and divers tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Filled by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, made sons of God, — what wondrous thoughts are these ? How beautiful the conclusion that follows upon them : “ If sons, heirs also : heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

Doubtless, heaven alone can reveal to us the full meaning of these wondrous expressions, if indeed we had not

better say that not even heaven can fully explain them. But to-day we will dwell upon one special aspect, the variety of gifts and graces which the guidance of the Spirit gives.

No thoughtful man can study the biographies of the Catholic Church, and not be struck by the varied characteristics of her children. Made heirs by the one Baptism, fed by the one food of the Divine Eucharist, hearing the same Mass the wide world over, believing the same Creed, and obeying the same Commandments, nevertheless, "the Spirit breatheth where He will, and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh, or whither He goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The variety of the beauty of holiness in the Catholic Church is as bright, and lovely, and interesting as is the natural variety in the mineral kingdom, or the floral, or the chemical ; yes, and it far surpasses these.

Take the wide range of thought, from Mary most holy, immaculate in her conception, and John the Baptist sanctified before birth, and Anne Catherine Emmerich who could remember her Baptism which took place when she was but a few hours old, to the penitent thief redeemed on his hard death-bed of the cross, and the French prince whom the mercy of God saved as he fell in all the horror of his sudden and seemingly most unprovided death. Saint and sinner they come before us, types of that marvellous multitude that shall be revealed, each by each, in separate loveliness, when the Last Day shall show us unmistakably the work of the Spirit in the souls of men.

There will be the Apostles, but *what* Apostles ! Peter, head of the Church, penitent, loving, holding our hearts beneath his sway ; Paul, aflame with the Holy Ghost, risking all that he might gain all ; John, his eyes filled even on earth with heavenly radiance, his ears thrilled even on earth with angels' songs.

There will come the many priests who abode in quiet parishes, with Philip Neri and Jean Baptiste Vianney and John di Rossi for their patrons ; and the priests who left home under vow never to return again, like Dorié and Venard, and who won the martyr's crown ; and they who died by the seashore like Francis Xavier, far from home and kith and kin, yet without the martyrs' pangs ; and the nameless throng who met death as they faced plague and famine and gunshot, giving absolution to the cholera-stricken, and to the wounded soldier, and to the leper, like Damien, whom the world rose up to honor when he went to God with the vile brand of the loathsome disease upon him.

The contrasts, who shall name them all? Lacordaire, with his impassioned eloquence, and his intense humiliations ; Alexis, lying a pauper and unknown in his father's princely home, keeping that awful seal of silence utterly unbroken, though the hearts dearest to him were breaking, and leaving to God to reveal the secret of his sanctity when he was dead ; Francis of Geneva in his ardent, openly expressed, intense affections ; and Aloysius Gonzaga in his austere, calm, persistent self-control. There is Augustine, once stained with gross iniquity, his grand intellect perverted, his graces squandered, then casting himself at the feet of God, a model of penitents, founder of a monastic order, doctor of divine love ; and there are Bernard, and Dominic, and Benedict, in their lifelong holiness, founders likewise, and brothers of Ignatius the soldier, and Alphonsus the lawyer, and Paul the hermit, and Vincent de Paul the herder, all founders also. And there are De Renty the baron, and Nicholas Flûe the burgher, and Ozanam the scholar, and Benedict Joseph the beggar, and Louis the king, and the piper who piped for the guests in the tavern, and Simon Stylites on his pillar, and Gerard the lay-brother, and John Berchmans the scholastic, and Liebermann the converted

Jew, and the Holy Man of Tours, and the sailor Marceau, and Columbus the discoverer of a continent, and the little idiot who could say only, but he said it over and over again untiringly, "I believe, I hope, I love," and so departed to his God, Who made of him a lily in His Paradise above.

And the women ! Think first who stood at the Cross of Christ. A virgin — the Virgin of virgins, Mary immaculate ; and Mary the wife of Cleophas, an honored wife and a mother ; and Magdalen, out of whom had been cast seven devils. It is the picture of the whole history of the Spirit's work in women's souls, endless, amazing, for which throughout eternity we shall give thanks to God. Led by the Spirit — led by the Spirit — in various ways, by myriad paths ; fed by the same sacraments, children of the same holy Church, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ — they shall all meet in the same heaven at last.

IF THOU HADST KNOWN

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE gospel for the ninth Sunday after Pentecost tells us of that touching scene when our compassionate Lord wept over the city of Jerusalem, saying : " If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace : but now they are hidden from thy eyes." They are words which are repeated a million times, the wide world over, by hearts that are aching with terror and remorse : " If I had known ! If only I had known ! But now it is too late."

They are words of intense sadness ; no thoughtful man can hear or read them without a thrill of fear. Who has not, in his past, some hour, some day, of which he says

ever to himself mournfully: "If I had known!" It is the cry of Augustine: "Too late have I known Thee, too late have I loved Thee, O Beauty of Ancient Days, yet ever new!" It is the cry of every penitent sinner, of every pardoned soul. And it has a natural tendency to weigh down man's spirit, to fill the mind with gloom and depression, and to sadden painfully the heart. We may hope that we are forgiven, we have heard the words of absolution, we may trust that the Precious Blood has been poured over us, and that we are clean in God's sight; yet the thought of the uneffaced scars remain, and we think that nothing can blot out the past, or give back to us "the days that are not," in order that we may turn them all to the honor and glory of the God Whom we once offended.

But are we so sure of this?

In the letters of Blessed Margaret Mary, she writes to a friend of a prayer which she was accustomed to repeat, when she felt that she had fallen into some error or mistake; a simple prayer indeed, but full of intense consolation for many a more heavily burdened conscience than hers. It is as follows: —

"O my Love! pay for Thy poor slave; repair the evil that I have committed; make it turn to Thy glory, the edification of my neighbor, and the good of my own soul."

What is impossible to God Who loves the sinner, though He hates the sin? He Who can bring spring after the winter, and health after sickness, and joy after sorrow, — He Who can "touch into green leaf again the years that the locust hath eaten," — can He not, in His almighty love and unerring wisdom, bring good out of your sin or mine?

While life lasts, there is hope. It is a worse than useless thing for any man to lie down supinely, saying that his past is past, and can never be repaired, and that life for him hereafter is a spoiled and shameful thing. We know well

that it is impossible for any of us to fathom the entire mind of God ; that none of us, neither the wisest theologian nor the holiest saint, can grasp the entire meaning of the things which He condescends to tell us. When to-day's gospel says that, beholding Jerusalem He wept over it, saying those mournful words, "If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace : but now they are hidden from thy eyes," be sure that other thoughts had place with these mournful ones in His all-seeing vision. Looking on into the future, He foretold the evil days that should come upon the city, when her enemies should beat her flat to the ground, and her children within her, and not leave in her a stone upon a stone : *because* — O, awful cause ! — "thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." Yet, while He spoke, and His holy eyes grew dim with our human tears, do we imagine for one moment that this was all He saw and knew? He knew also that it was the Jewish disciples listening to Him, who were yet to be gathered in that very city, one day not far distant, when upon them the Holy Ghost would come ; and He knew that these same Jewish men would go forth from that doomed city, and gather the nations beneath the cross which was soon to be erected on one of the hills that stand round Jerusalem. It was a doomed city truly, doomed to famine and fire and foe ; yet it was the city to which the whole world would look for the word of peace and the Bread of Life. And among the disciples who hung upon His lips, His eyes rested on one who should deny Him, and yet should afterwards be head of His Church, and Chief Shepherd of His sheep ; and his Lord seeing him loved him, in spite of that future sin and dire disgrace.

Two oceans, fathomless and vast, stretch out before us, — the ocean of God's mercy, and the ocean of the mystery of sin. Drop your plummet as deeply and as daringly as you

will, you can never sound those waters; yet, believe me, that thought of sin's mystery is the less tremendous. The highest archangels with all their intelligence, the seraphim with all their passionate love, cannot pierce down to the depths of God's mercy, of that infinite compassion, new every morning, of Him Who never ceases to remember that He made His poor, pitiful, erring creatures out of dust.

Dark in spite of its horrible fires, awful in its unending power to hurt and hold, hell lies before us, grandly made for its certain purpose, as planned in the mind of God. It is said, "Who enter there, leave hope behind," and that any who may enter cry there forever, "Too late! too late!" But oh! why make a hell of earth? There is no *too late* with God for a repentant soul. He Who has stooped to save it, and to pardon and love it, asks of it holy confidence and hope. He makes a saint of a sinner; He Who can raise the dead to life, and Whose name and Whose Spirit is Love.

ONE KEY TO A MYSTERY

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE days are dark, and hearts are heavy with forebodings as to what shall be the end of the questions and problems of our time. Labor and capital, wealth and poverty, stand over against each other with lowering faces; murder is in the air, and the spirits of evil are abroad almost visibly as it were. There are rumors of threatening disease and want, and the mind at times shrinks back affrighted from the days that seem coming on the earth. What does it all mean, and who shall bring the remedy to the evils of the age?

The tenth Sunday after Pentecost has for the gospel the story of the Pharisee and the Publican. It is near the feast day, too, of St. Mary Magdalen, the twenty-second of July, and that gospel tells how a woman who was a sinner came to a Pharisee's house when our Divine Saviour was his guest. Have you ever distinctly realized to yourself the wonderful scene of that banquet-hall? There at the feet of Jesus knelt one whose sins made her the scandal of the place; and unrebuked she washed His feet with tears, and ceased not to lavish her kisses on them, and to wipe them with her hair. Then, as the Pharisee murmured secretly within himself, the Master read his thoughts, and gave the heavenly rebuke that has come down through the ages as a keynote of the Sacred Heart: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much," and it blends with the closing sentence of this Sunday's gospel: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." What have these things to do with the impending, imminent, potent questions of to-day?

Let us look at the matter from another point of view.

It is not the first time that the earth has stood aghast, and that gloom and desolation have seemed to cover her like a pall. Consider the first ages of the Church, when the blood of the martyrs flowed in torrents, and men looked with utter contempt on those "who worshipped for their God One who had been crucified as a slave." Of the thirty-two Popes, from St. Peter himself to Pope Sylvester, half were martyrs; and five suffered martyrdom consecutively in eight years. Their adherents were scourged, beheaded, burnt, horribly tortured, and tempted; yet within them glowed ever the light of faith and love, sustaining them; while the condition of the poor and the suffering among the heathen, without that sustaining power, was far worse than the martyrdoms. That was many more than a thousand

years ago, but only a century has sped since France was deluged with blood and surfeited with horror; and what historian can write a universal history, and not make it a history of suffering and distress? Over it all, and through it all, the fact remains true that God, the omnipotent God, is Love. Who shall read us the mystery? Who shall right the wrong? Who explain the problem of human woe?

There is one explanation, which comes with infallible authority. Sin has entered into the world, and death by sin. When Jesus Christ came to earth, He came to suffer and to die—to die in unutterable anguish, after a life of poverty and humble daily toil. He has left us an example that we should follow; and if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine. For the joy proposed unto Him He underwent the cross and despised the shame. The same joy is set to-day before the eyes of all His followers. The way to reach it is the way He trod, the way of the cross; and whoso humbleth himself shall be exalted; and they who love much shall be forgiven.

Nineteen centuries ago, the era of martyrdom began, and men went with smiles to the fire and the scaffold as a bridegroom goes to the feast. So, centuries later, the Venerable Thomas More mounted gayly to the block, light of tread and light of heart, ready and glad to die. But the martyrdom of many to-day is the martyrdom of life, to live and to suffer, and to see their fellow beings suffer, and yet to believe in God and to honor and love Him, upholding His cause in the darkest hour, sure that He is really conquering when all seems to go against Him, and that, through all apparent defeat and disgrace, His will is being wrought out perfectly, just as contrary winds hold up a ship.

“ Ride on, ride on triumphantly,
 Thou glorious will, ride on!
 Faith's pilgrim sons behind thee take
 The road that thou hast gone.

"He always wins who sides with God,
 To him no chance is lost.
 God's will is sweetest to him when
 It triumphs at his cost.

"Ill that He blesses is our good,
 And unblest good is ill,
 And all is right that seems most wrong,
 If it be His sweet will."

Yet still you say this does not explain the mystery? Try once again. You know your own soul better than I do. You know its hidden trials, its temptations, alas! its sins. May I ask you these questions: How real, how deep, is your heart's humility? How real, how deep, is its love for God? If you find, as I trust you may find, one spark of true love there, one keen thrill of humble remorse and shame, kneel down, in these dark days, silently before the tabernacle, under the shadow of the crucifix, close to the Sacred Heart. Kneel silently there with Magdalen, and bathe those feet with your tears. Remember that when first she kissed them, there were no scars on them. They bear forever now those sacred wounds, for you and for me to weep over and to kiss with tenderest love. As you kneel there in the stillness, you will become aware of three who are beside you: Mary, Christ's immaculate mother, and Mary the penitent lover, and John the virgin disciple, the dearest disciple of all. What gift did Christ give to His best beloved? The gift of pain! The privilege to stand by His cross and see His utter humiliation, and to die because they could not die when His life fled! If we could explain the mystery of pain in no other manner, one key to that mystery lies surely here, and he who kneels at the cross in loving humility will find it.

The story is told of an abbess in a certain convent, who asked her Lord which of the nuns there was His best

beloved. Then, in answer, He brought her to a little cell where a young sister lay upon a bed of loneliness and pain, away from active work and seeming usefulness; and the abbess heard our Saviour say:—

“Blessed are they that go
Into the hidden life of prayer and pain
And there with Me upon the cross remain.
True to the end, from creatures far apart,
Locked in the secret cloister of my Heart,
They shall perfected be in ways most hard
To flesh and blood, as this sweet Lutigarde
O best beloved, thou art dear to Me.
O best beloved, thou art near to Me.
Come to thy Lover, little Lutigarde!”

As the manifold cries of earth echo mournfully around us in myriad sounds of woe, another sound, deeper, stronger, rises upward with holy sweetness, and a voice exclaims: “I saw a great multitude which no man could number, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.” And another voice makes answer: “Thy kingdom come, O God! Thy will be done.”

EPHPHETA

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CARDINAL NEWMAN has spoken of “the wonderful identity of type which characterizes the Catholic Church from first to last.” It is a characteristic which impresses the thoughtful observer with perhaps as much awe and interest as the variety of gifts and graces which

are also the inheritance of her children. Consider, for instance, the religious life. Whether practised in the cloister or the school, the hermit's cell or the crowded hospital, its attraction is felt by the most cultured races of the earth and by the rudest barbarians, when they are brought into the fold of Peter, and have fed upon the Bread of the strong, and the Wine that maketh virgins.

The monastic life began in Upper Egypt in the third century under the guidance of that St. Anthony who dwelt in the desert from his young manhood till his death at the advanced age of one hundred and five. Forty years later, Pachomius built the first monastery, St. Anthony's monks having lived in separate cells. A hundred years after his death, the monks who followed his rule numbered fifty thousand.

But the ascetic life they adopted had begun long before the third century of the Christian Church. Fervent souls were guided in it by no less teachers than St. Peter and St. Paul; and in the times of the Roman persecutions it was practised in the family and the home. Men and women of all classes and all manner of lives felt the divine attraction, and the English writer Allies has well said: "I know not whether the choice of St. Augustine, when converted at thirty-two, is not as striking as that of St. Anthony when at twenty he gave up the world; and the devotion of the bishop instituting the cenobitic life in his household and clergy as remarkable as that of the ascetic in the wilderness. The type of St. Nilus, who in middle age left his palace as prefect of Constantinople, under the counsel of St. Chrysostom, carrying with him his son to become a monk on Mount Sinai, and leading his wife to a similar choice, is as strong as that of St. Ambrose, called from the uprightness of natural justice to the episcopal throne on which he exercised all supernatural virtues, and commended

the mother of his Lord as the ensample and mistress of virginity."

These are great names of the early ages, but nearly in our remembrance a whole family of Episcopalians entered the Catholic Church; the husband and wife, most deeply attached to each other, applied to the Holy See for a separation; the one became a priest, the other a Visitation nun; the only son followed his father's footsteps; three daughters became Ursulines, the youngest and only remaining daughter became a Visitandine like her mother.

In Cardinal Newman's "Callista," that remarkable sketch of the third century, the author makes his saintly heroine cry out in her martyrdom: "O beautiful Light! O lovely Light, my Light and my Life! O my Light and my Life, receive me!" He describes how she is laid upon the rack, her wrists and ankles seized, extended, fastened to the movable blocks at the extremities of the planks; how she speaks her last word: "For Thee, my Lord and Love, for Thee! . . . Accept me, O my Love, upon this bed of pain! . . . And come to me, O my Love, make haste and come!" They torture her, she faints; they wait for her coming to; they draw near and look at her, and cannot bring her back. "She has gone to her Lord and her Love."

It is the story of a St. Agnes, a St. Agatha, a St. Dorothea, a St. Thekla. Yet, only a few years ago, the convert daughter of a noble English house laid down her life, after the slow martyrdom of a long and painful illness bravely and gayly borne in her convent home; and in the early morning of her death-day, she said to her superior: "Do you think our Lord will come to-day? He will come with the dawn, He will come with the sun; He has always been the sunlight of my life." Let us reverently follow the beautiful description of the final scene.

"She spoke with great difficulty, and only for a moment at a time. In a struggle to cough she sat up straight and said: 'This must be death; well, death shall be as God wills — when God wills. Tell Him so — all that is most tender to our Blessed Lord — the most abject submission to His holy will.' After this, speech became still more difficult, but her next words were quite articulate. She said: 'Is this the agony? Agony for God! What joy! Is n't it joy?' Her very last word was the Holy Name. It was a great struggle, but she was able to pronounce it quite clearly. During the renewal of her vows a most beautiful smile came over her face, and her breathing ceased, but so imperceptibly that only those quite close to her could notice when the last breath was drawn."

Sometimes, as we think upon these things, beholding, from our place of safety in the one true Church of the one true God, her wonderful identity of type and her amazing variety of gifts and graces, we are tempted to judge sharply those who, standing without, misrepresent and insult her, and alas! seeing see not, and hearing hear not. And then St. Paul speaks to us in to-day's epistle: "*Last of all, He was seen by me also.* For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace in me hath not been void." And in to-day's gospel we read how they besought our Divine Lord to lay His hand upon a deaf and dumb man, and how He put His fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue, and looking up to heaven, groaned, and said to him, *Ephpheta*, Be opened, — "and immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right."

If it seem to us to require a like miracle to make many a man about us acknowledge the Church of God, let us

remember that our God is the God of miracles, and let us pray unflinching, and hope tirelessly, till He shall say to these also *Ephpheta*, and shall be seen by these also, and until His grace in them shall not be void.

SILENCE

FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

S AID a great saint grandly: "The Father uttered one Word; that Word is His Son: and He utters Him forever in everlasting silence, and the soul to hear It must be silent."

This saying comes to mind on the feast of the Transfiguration, when we read how our Divine Lord charged His disciples, to whom on a high mountain apart He had just revealed His glory, that they should tell the vision to no man till the Son of Man should be risen from the dead.

We are living in a time of peculiar publicity. A man's house is no longer his castle. An army of reporters invades it, and the sayings and doings of family life are dragged forth to the eye of day, and paraded in the newspapers. So far has the evil gone, that people seem to have a sort of hungry craving to behold themselves in print; and long lists of names and descriptions of dresses appear after a wedding or a party, like the names of the rescued on a burnt steamship, or of the heroes returning wounded from the seat of war. A continual feast is spread for vanity and self-conceit, while envy lurks in the shadow, and carping criticism whispers at the door.

Far worse than this, men's characters are well-nigh set at naught. Some light mind and idle tongue starts a surmise; it runs on, and the next tongue makes it a suspicion;

the third repeats it as a downright statement of fact. Nobody intends to tell a falsehood about it, but somehow it gets to be a falsehood ; and the blame falls back, too often, where it has least reason to fall.

What character can feel itself safe in these days? We may truly answer that no character is safe. There is no help for it except to put one's self wholly and humbly into the hand of God, bearing criticism and evil report as we would bear any other cross or trial, knowing that in His own time He will certainly overrule all for good.

In Father Faber's notes on *inward peace*, he remarks how exceedingly sweet in the ears of the disciples our Lord's dear voice must have been, and how His favorite greeting to them was, "Peace be to you." And then he says "that inward peace seems to rise upward as from some depth in the soul ; and that, strangely enough, it need not be forfeited by activity, but may rather collect us for fresh activity ; that it gives light also, and makes things clear in our minds, especially supernatural things ; but it can be forfeited by indolence to grace, or an undue interest in worldly matters." We may remember also how St. Francis de Sales once wrote to Mme. de Chantal that he had been so overwhelmed with press of work, that he had been unable to make his meditation, and yet that his mind, by divine grace, had not lost its interior recollection nor continual union with God.

Mark, now, how Father Faber tells us this inward peace is to be gained. He says it is "first, by having few wants, and thus few irritabilities ; second, by not meddling with other people's business, nor setting them right ; third, by not judging them ; fourth, by some sort of exercise of silence ; fifth, by looking after humility particularly." And he promises us, as the fruits of all this inward peace, gained by this method of self-discipline and mortification, a cer-

tain robustness (as he terms it) in the practice of virtues, a great sweetness to others, sensible sweetness in devotion, a facility of realizing the presence of God, and a peculiar enjoyment of the very peace itself, "something beyond words to say, — it is a *touch of God*."

St. Cajetan, the founder of the Theatines, was friend and cotemporary of St. Philip Neri, Faber's spiritual father. His feast, August seventh, follows directly the feast of the Transfiguration, and his life is a direct commentary upon Father Faber's notes on inward peace. We are told of him that no idle or useless words ever fell from his lips, still less any which might appear harsh or uncharitable, but that his conversation was always regarding something which concerned either the glory of God or the good of his neighbor; and when he spoke, he had a simplicity and simple dignity of speech which impressed every one with the greatest veneration. At the same time he was the most zealous observer and promoter of silence. It came to pass with St. Cajetan that while ever at the service of the sick, the needy, and an innumerable number of penitents, even while carrying out these works, his soul was absorbed in God; "often it seemed as if he had been thinking during his meditation only of the best way of helping his neighbor, so instantly would he fly to the relief of any one in trouble of mind or body; and, on the other hand, it appeared as if amidst what many would have found an intolerable distraction, he only found a more perfect way of praying and uniting himself with his Divine Master."

It is noteworthy that this blessed founder of the Theatines is one of the saints concerning whom some marked visible action of the Holy Ghost is related. His biographer tells us that in his childhood, a white dove flew down from heaven and settled on his head, while these words were clearly heard by all: "Peace be with you forever, O Cajetan! Beware of

losing it from whatever cause ! ” And then, wheeling three times around his head, the dove disappeared. A holy priest interpreted this as follows : that the Holy Spirit of God had descended thus upon the child, to give him this great gift of peace ; and the three gyrations signified that this peace was to be, with God, with himself, and with his neighbor. We shall see, says the historian, how no one in this world ever maintained this blessed peace more perfectly than Cajetan, and that through his whole life.

Let us learn to-day two lessons, — of charity and of silence. If one-half the time we waste in talking of our neighbors were only spent in praying to God for them, we would pass many an hour on Thabor, and see the world transformed into the image of our transfigured Lord : and secondly, were half the time we give to conversation, given instead to silence before the Blessed Sacrament, or in that inner temple of our heart where God’s Spirit makes His home, — so often, alas ! an unregarded Guest, — we should hear in that deep stillness the Father utter His one eternal Word, and the Spirit say, “Peace be to you for ever !” and we should exclaim with the disciples, “Lord, it is good for us to be here !”

NEVER ALONE

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE true conception of the Catholic idea concerning that article in the creed, “The Communion of Saints,” is singularly beautiful as well as instructive and helpful. It reminds us that the Catholic Church is one great family, one united household, although part are in heaven, and part on earth, and part in the realm of the waiting souls in their place of purgation and patient peace.

Everywhere is one love of the Heart of Jesus ; everywhere one Divine Spirit, animating all ; everywhere one heavenly Father, Whose tender care is all-embracing and unforgetting. The Church triumphant, the Church militant, the Church in purgatory, — what are all these but one Church, bound by a common tie to a common head ?

The special point of this unfailing union on which we will dwell to-day is the supernaturally natural, the amiable, the affectionate way in which it is made manifest. The Catholic Church does not limit her calendar, and her festivals, and her nomenclature of churches, schools, asylums, hospitals, religious orders, to the men and women of the earliest ages of the Christian era. Such limited remembrance of her holy and heroic children could never satisfy the irrepressible love of her great maternal heart. She is thoroughly aware that hers is the limitless possession of the Bread of the strong and the Wine that maketh virgins ; and she knows that century after century, — yes, and year after year, — will give to her service confessors, saints, and martyrs too, if need be. She blazons their names with rejoicing on her roll-call, a Pius V. and a Charles and a William beside a Chrysostom and an Augustine and a Jerome ; a Genevieve and a Teresa and a Zita beside a Helen and a Dorothea and a Catherine of Alexandria. She is not afraid to call a Joan of Arc from the battlefield nor a Julie Billiart from the nuns of the nineteenth century, and consider their claims to canonization ; for she believes that the Divine Spirit, Whose vivifying breath makes her the Living Church she is, is Himself the Author of her perpetual fecundity, and that by Him she has been, is now, and will be forever, the fruitful mother of saints.

Therefore she binds all nations into one. Happy, indeed, are the eyes that see the things which we see ! Look at the family life in the Catholic Church everywhere, not

the family as divided into separate households, but the one, united, world-wide family of the household of the faith, bound by its marvellous strong tie everywhere to the centre of its unity, God's chosen representative of His own divine paternity, Christ's own vicar and vicegerent, the Holy Spirit's mouthpiece, the Pope at Rome. *Amor Roma*: beautiful and holy anagram! Rome rhymes with home, and all roads lead there. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, black and white, rich and poor, flock to the bosom of the Catholic Church and call her mother; new converts meet her sons and daughters, and declare that they find themselves each among his own people, and in his Father's house. Over and again, as on the first Pentecost, men enter into the true fold, and stand there in rapturous amazement, saying: "How hear we every man our own tongue wherein we were born!" For every tongue beneath the sky belongs to her; and each of us hears, in her musical accents, his mother's voice.

She calls — and the nations gather at her bidding. From the ends of the earth come her bishops, archbishops, patriarchs, like little children to her feet. From climes as diverse as Scandinavia and Hindostan, from realms as alien as England and China, from the home of the most intellectual Aryan peoples and from the huts and dens of the most uncouth savages of the earth, from Patagonia and from Paris, from Spain and the Sahara, from the Boer-land and from Boston, from the vales and mountains of each continent, and the islands of each ocean, at the majestic and unequalled sound of her imperial but motherly decree, her farthest sons come home.

Scattered everywhere are her religious orders, known by the revered name of Paul or of Augustine, of Francis d'Assisi or De Sales, of St. Ann, of St. Joseph, of Our Lady, of that sweetest name of Jesus; or by some holy title of charity,

of mercy, of purity, of wisdom, or of the Sacred Heart, or the Blessed Sacrament. The traveller finds them in Alaska and Terra del Fuego ; in lone and lorn Molokai, rocked by the waves of the Pacific ; in Ireland, hearing ever the roar of the Atlantic ; up in the snowbound Alpine passes, down among the gold mines of our own wild West and our Pennsylvania coal mines ; through the low, wide, river-realm of the Amazon, and high up where its mysterious sources are hid in the everlasting hills. Scattered everywhere, each band has its own place in the mother-heart of the great Church of the ages. The eagle eye of the Sovereign Pontiff, who, as the poet truly says, "sits on Rome's tower and farther sees than we," scans the horizon everywhere. No man is ever alone in that vast communion which is named the Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints.

Alone? Every saint in heaven is our brother, our sister. We speak to them with words of human affection ; we ask them to help us, and we believe that they are strong to help, and that their prayers avail with God. It is their names that are given in Baptism to our children ; we keep their feasts with rejoicing ; we make personal friends among them, know this saint better than that one, and expect to see them and know them face to face at last.

Alone? Our dead go from us, we lay them with tears and kisses beneath the sod. But *alone* — when we meet in the Heart of Jesus ; when our prayers and communions and Masses can reach them? Speak, St. Augustine ! "One *never* loses those whom one loves in Him Whom we can never lose." Truly may we say, in the words of to-day's gospel : "Happy are the eyes that see the things which we see !"

MARY, QUEEN OF HEAVEN

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

WHAT mortal pen or tongue can paint the untarnished beauty or the fadeless glory of our Mother's feast to-day? As we think of it, the words of the Hebrew Scriptures are chiming in our ears, and like ordained types the ancient story of King Solomon in his glory doing honor to his mother, and of King Assuerus welcoming the Jewish maiden Esther to share his royal throne, mingle with strains from the holiest of love-songs, the Canticle of Canticles, foretelling Mary's far surpassing honor.

"Come from Libanus, My spouse, come from Libanus, come. . . . She was exceeding fair, and her incredible beauty made her appear agreeable and lovely in the eyes of all. The king loved her more than all the women, and she had favor and kindness before him above all the women, and he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen. And he commanded a magnificent feast to be prepared for all the princes and for his servants, for the marriage and wedding of Esther. On the third day she laid aside the garments she wore, and put on her glorious apparel. And glittering in royal robes, she passed through all the doors in order, and stood before the king, where he sat upon his royal throne. . . . The king arose to meet her, and bowed to her, and sat down upon his throne; and a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand. . . . Come from Libanus, My spouse, come from Libanus, come; thou shalt be crowned. Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, and the rain is over and gone. . . . Come near, then, and touch the sceptre. And, as she held her peace, he

took the golden sceptre, and laid it upon her neck, and kissed her."

If there be one doctrine in the Catholic Church upon which we feel that we cannot waste words to argue, it is that concerning Mary our Mother, the Mother of God.

"Can aught within us or around,
On earth beneath, in heaven on high,
Or yet within creation's bound,
Avail thy state to magnify?
What shall fresh dignity afford
Unto the Mother of the Lord?"

"And if the millions of our race
Should give themselves thy slaves to be,
If kings should bow before thy face,
And peoples pledge their fealty,
What were it to *His* service 'neath
The cottage-roof of Nazareth?"

"O thou in whom the eternal King,
Whose arm is strong, great things hath wrought,
Whatever to thy feet we bring,
Shall we exceed thy due in aught,
Until an offering we invent,
Greater than the Omnipotent?"

This day the second Eve has entered in, to that immortal Eden where sin can never come. There the trees of life grow fair and fadeless; no forbidden fruits are on those branches, that droop but cast no shadow over the crystal seas and peaceful streams. Flowers blossom there in a beauty beyond tongue's telling, in a bloom that cannot wither, and a fragrance that can never fail or tire; but through the gates of pearl the angels brought to-day from earth a blossom, beside which all heaven's beauty is but a shadow, or an image in the tide. Earth has outdone Heaven this morning. -The Lord has come down here to His garden, to gather His choicest lily; and the nine

choirs of angels hail her as she enters, Queen of the Angels, Mistress of the Universe, Mother of God on high.

As she goes on and ever upward, the music of the spheres greets her, and then the music of heaven swells through the gates that open before her on soft-moving hinges without clash or clang. Ah, that music ! ah, that music ! where all minor chords are absent, and yet none can miss from the glorious anthems those beloved pathetic strains. Never a discord mars the harmony. The dome of heaven resounds with the chant of a great multitude, but there is naught of crash or clamor, no deafening shout, no strain, no tumult. Like the swell of ocean answering to ocean comes the anthem, grandly swayed by law and order, in a marvellous accord. And the ear has no longer even the pain caused by a skilled but unsympathetic musician striving to interpret what he does not comprehend. Heart answers to heart, and soul to soul ; for men understand each other, and their God, in heaven, "without noise of words."

And yet, O Mother, tenderest-hearted ! thou who here wast the Mother of seven dolors, the Mother of sorrows, the Mother of the Crucified ! nay, Mary, purest, whitest, immaculate, who nevertheless wast the Mother of sinners ! is there no sorrow at all in heaven, no shadow upon the sea of crystal, no pathos in the song ? Has thy heart lost the sword of grief forever from it ? Is not one pang still left to thee, even thee, in thy radiant heaven ?

We call thee Queen of the Universe, Sovereign Lady of men and angels. There is sin upon earth, and sorrow, and trouble ; thy children go sad here, and very weary. There is pain, keen unutterable anguish, in thy realm of the souls of the dead, O compassionate Mother. But there is another realm, more sad, more dread than these. From the dark depths of hell, whose magnificent fires, majestic, vindictive, created strong to torture and not to kill, are to

blaze throughout eternity to the greater glory of God, does not cry go up to trouble thy exquisite peace, sweet Mother ! and drive the sword of sorrow into thy stainless heart again ? Forever and forever must not the voices of endless anguish rise up and make the minor in the eternal chorus of created things around the throne ?

We pause and wait, breathless with pain, heart-sick for an answer. Yet through the summer evening the August moon shines down upon us ; and a certain peace and solemn repose of nature is beneath, above, beyond the unfailing questions and doubts and woes of earth. We have asked the solution of a mystery locked in the heart of the King of mysteries, Who would not be God, could we finite beings bring Him to our level, and cite Him at our tribunals, and ask of Him wherefore and why and how ?

But this we know to-day, — our Mother is in heaven, God's Mother. He has set her at His right hand, and laid His sceptre upon her neck, and kissed her, and made her Queen. What a Spaniard wrote of her, vibrates in the heart of every man born of a woman, "She never can forget what it cost her to become our Mother," not your Mother alone, and my Mother, but the Mother of every soul for whom Christ died. She has entered into the raptures of the eternal kingdom ; she knows the secrets of mercy and of justice hidden in the heart of God away from the eyes of men. The grand fires of hell are endless, glorious, exceeding wonderful. We bow down and acknowledge it at the feet of the Most High God. But who shall enter them, no man alive knoweth. By the grace of God it shall not be you nor I ; — nor the neighbor either, whom we are to love and pray and hope for as for ourselves. And if we say this who are sin-stained and guilty, what dost thou say, O Mary, thou lily and spouse of God ?

THE FAMILY OF THE SAINTS

SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASSUMPTION —
ST. JOACHIM'S DAY

BY an instinct of singular beauty, — one of those “touches of nature which make the whole world kin,” as well as one of those profound sources of meditation that the Divine Office affords, — the Church has placed the feast of St. Joachim on the Sunday in the octave of the Assumption. It is as if she meant thus to tell us that when the Blessed Virgin went up to her heavenly Father's palace and to His divine embrace, she was not then unmindful of her earthly father's presence and his greeting; he — may we not suppose it? — having been one of the favored saints who with great St. Joseph formed our blessed Lord's glorious retinue, when He passed in triumph through the gates of heaven at His ascension.

Why is it difficult for men to believe in the prayers and intercession of the saints? Why difficult to pray to the saints? The reason may in large measure be this — that faith in the Communion of Saints (*i. e.*, outside the pale of the Catholic Church) is, in our country, very faint and dim; that men have, indeed, but a vague conception of the meaning of that article in the creed. They would read with amazement the words of a famous spiritual writer, to the effect “that devotion to the Apostles is a *very affectionate devotion*, of the same kind, though far higher in degree, as that which we feel to the patriarchs of the Old Testament”; and that Palafox, who was noted for his Old Testament devotion, says that his devotion to the Apostles was *mas sensitivo* than any of his Old Testament devotions, *except that to*

Adam and Eve, which was a devotion of *gran ternura*, extreme tenderness !

Yet notice the connection of ideas. When you once read this statement, do you not find yourself questioning, who was this Palafox who felt this sensitive devotion for the holy men who lived in those days long gone by, before our Lord came down to earth? What manner of mind and heart had he who has declared so naïvely that he experienced great tenderness of affection for those first parents of us all, concerning whom many of us only remember, besides, that they were the first sinners?

This one singular statement opens to us a mine of thought, and would attract us to Palafox, even were he otherwise unknown. Bishop Spalding has said: "In literature, as in all things spiritual, quality is everything, quantity goes for nothing. A phrase outweighs whole volumes." And certainly here is a phrase which, to a meditative mind, means much.

Had not this Spanish Palafox gone back in spirit, many and many a time, to those holy days when man and the earth were young; and realized, as few of us stop to realize, how beautiful, how magnificently gifted, how gloriously good that first man Adam was? Sickness, suffering, and sorrow were unknown to him. "The greatness of his science was such that we hardly form an idea of it to ourselves; and the most startling miracles of the saints are but feeble indications and partial recoveries of that rightful and supernatural dominion over nature which he possessed and exercised."

To this wise, noble, and innocent Adam, God gave Eve to be his companion, wise, noble, and innocent like to him; and the earthly Paradise to which they were as the human sun and moon, the beneficent king and queen, was of such surpassing loveliness, that the Lord God came down to

walk there, and there find all things good. When we let our minds dwell thoughtfully on what that blessed life of Adam and Eve must have been, we begin to understand why Palafox loved them well.

But when we add to this the memory that Adam and Eve, earning to themselves the sorrowful title of the first sinners, became also the first penitents; when we think of the remorse and shame of those organizations, so wonderfully gifted both in the natural and supernatural order; when we strive to picture to ourselves their grief when they saw themselves barred out forever from that earthly Eden, and from that diviner Paradise which God Himself made there, when He deigned to walk and talk with them as He would never do again; when we consider that the first bitter tears earth ever saw were shed by them, the first cry of contrition was wrung from their trembling lips, the first prayer for pardon sprang from their broken hearts, — does there not begin to stir within us a something that makes us understand why Palafox felt for his and our first parents, not only affection but tenderness, and a tenderness of extreme degree?

And what are Adam and Eve now doing, in that heavenly Paradise, where after "heroic penance" they dwell now in a joy and beauty they never knew on earth, forgiven and crowned again? In the abiding presence of their God, have they forgotten us here who owe the taint of our nature to their awful fall? Do you think they can ever cease to pray for the whole human race, till the Judgment Day is over, and all use for prayer is past forever?

The mention of Palafox and of this little circumstance of his interior life has brought us into communion with those first sinners and first penitents, now tried and triumphant saints, through whom all life, natural and supernatural, has come to man. It has made us feel — God grant it! — some fresh true love for them; some hope and trust in their

love and prayers. Oh, that we spent more time with the saints of God !

Men nowadays give much time and thought, not only to the heroes of history, but to the characters in mere fiction. Is it not quite as well worth our while to dwell in spirit with those blessed ones who, somewhere in God's presence, are thrilling with love for Him ; and who, in Him, love us ; and whose prayers for us are mighty before His throne ?

THE REALISM OF THE SAINTS

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE lives of the saints contain certain scenes that stand out prominently in human history, or that have become part and parcel of our own lives and history. In strange contrast we see the two gardens forever famous in the life of Augustine — the one in Milan where he cast himself down in impotent despair and cowardly irresolution, and there heard the child's voice speak the words divinely destined to save him : "*Tolle, lege !*" "Take and read !" — the other that garden in Ostia which he and his saintly mother looked out upon, "leaning in a certain window, discoursing there together alone very sweetly, inquiring between ourselves of what sort the eternal life of the saints was to be."

Again, we see St. Philip Neri with Sister Ursula Benincasa, after he had so sharply and long tested her spirit, and she had humbly and patiently borne all ; we hear him tell her that she need fear no longer, for her visions are true, and God guides her ; and then he adds the marvellous assurance that just as truly as they now walk up and down that room

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together, and talk together, they shall one day walk and talk together in the paradise of God.

We see Anthony of Padua on his death-bed, his face lit with a more than earthly light, his eyes fixed on a more than earthly beauty ; and as the bystanders ask him in reverent fear what he beholds, we hear the amazing answer, "I see my God !" and so he dies.

We watch the girl Agnes go to her cruel martyrdom in the fresh bloom of her beauty, her face like the sun, gay laughter on her lips, fearless alike of torture or shame or death, crying out to her persecutors, in her girlish voice, words that are the veritable echoes of St. Paul's grand utterance : "I know Whom I have believed, and am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

In contrast comes before us that peaceful death-scene, — the death of St. Agnes' twin-soul, St. Stanislaus Kostka, so famous for his remarkable personal beauty and the yet more remarkable beauty of his angelic spirit ; he who went up to heaven with the first rays of the Assumption's dawning, without thought or dread of a moment's purgatory, his face illuminated with a smile so joyous as to be described as laughter. "None, indeed, knew the precise moment at which his soul took flight, for no change passed over the sweet angelic countenance ; the color did not leave his cheek, nor did the brightness forsake his eye, but when one of the bystanders, with the view of renewing the joy which he always manifested at the sight of his picture of Mary, held it before his eyes, he gave no sign and made no movement, and so they knew he was dead — or, rather, alive with a better life, and already gazing on the unveiled glory of the incarnate God and of His blessed Mother."

We watch Aloysius Gonzaga praying, a boy of twelve years, a youth of seventeen years, a young man dying at

twenty-three. Surrounded by all this world can offer, heir to a dukedom, eldest son of a princely race, he has set his will on nobler things. Kneeling before the crucifix, bathed in tears of devotion, — rapt in ecstasy, seeing and hearing nothing of this world's pleasures, — God is his one thought and his one desire, and God, even here, is his exceeding great reward. The God of St. Aloysius grant to our boys, in these days of vile realism, the Saints' realism! Blessed are the clean-hearted, for they shall *see God*.

The saints' realism — the saints' realism — what does it mean but this, that God and the things of God, invisible, immortal, are the real and vital things to them? To a more or less degree, saints and saintly souls are prophets and seers. Cardinal Newman sings: —

“ The pageant of a kingdom vast,
And things unutterable, passed
Before the prophet's eye;
Dread shadows of the eternal throne,
The fount of life, and altar-stone,
Pavement, and them that trod thereon,
And those who worship nigh.”

That pageant, those things unutterable, those dread shadows, move in a divine reality and an unresisted power around the clean in heart. The more spiritual a man becomes, the more real to him are spiritual things, and the more do earthly things become only shadows and phantoms in the light of God. More plainly, more *terribly* plainly, in our day and generation, grows the need of an intense and special devotion to the Holy Spirit of God. “ The gifts of the Spirit,” says Lallemand, in his “ Spiritual Doctrine,” “ without reasoning, without perplexity, show us what is best, enabling us to discern it in the light of God with more or less of evidence, according to the degree in which we possess him.” And in “ L'Homme Spirituel ” we are told :

"The Holy Spirit is continually calling the soul inwards, continually inducing recollection and the concentration of the thoughts, continually prompting it to act, both interiorly and exteriorly, in a manner devoid of passion, yet not simply reasonable but divine."

Since we have spoken here of St. Stanislaus and St. Aloysius, let us not omit St. John Berchmans, the last of the saintly three who have shown what it is possible for a boy and a young man to be in the strength of God ; — this anecdote also reveals that sanctity is possible in all ages and conditions of life, if we yield ourselves completely to the Holy Spirit's sway. It was related to the venerable Cardinal Bellarmine that there was a young Jesuit novice so spotless and so favored by God through all his young life that never had he lost his baptismal innocence ; "and, neither asleep nor awake, had the slightest imagination come across the spotlessness of his mind." The holy old man was moved to tears, and said : "This is a very rare gift in a young man so full of spirits and life as he is." But when they also told the Cardinal that John, the Flemish scholastic, lying dead, had come to the age of manhood without ever committing a single wilful venial sin, the aged Bellarmine paused for a moment, and then said simply : "I honor the young man ; but what do you see wonderful in that ? Who would ever think of committing such a sin ?"

This is the realism of the saints.

What is it all but a fulfilment of to-day's collect : "Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us an increase of faith, hope, and charity ; and, that we may worthily obtain what Thou dost promise, *make us to love that which Thou dost command.* Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen." The mighty and overmastering love for God, inspired by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of men, produces such saints

as these of whom we have spoken ; and He can make us also saints, if we will obediently yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit's sway.

CATHOLIC LOYALTY

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

AMONG the many brilliant and beautiful sayings of Cardinal Newman, perhaps one of the most noticeable is this :—

“Our duty is to follow the Vicar of Christ whither he goeth, and never desert him, however we may be tried ; but to defend him at all hazards and against all comers, as a son would a father, and as a wife a husband, knowing that his cause is the cause of God.”

What superb loyalty from this master in the intellectual life, this dweller in high spiritual realms, this man with his strong grasp on the minds of other men, this leader in thought, this standard-bearer of a great crusade !

Our duty is — not to seek self ; not to criticize ; not to assert our own opinion ; not to have our own way. No ! “*Our* duty is, to follow the Vicar of Christ whither he goeth, and never desert him, however we may be tried.”

Can we rightly express to others the joy of a loyal heart ? Can those who do not know it by experience, rightly comprehend what true loyalty is ? It is that chivalrous spirit which finds its vent in words of poetry or of poetic fire ; in deeds of knightly valor and of humble, patient, self-forgetfulness. All through the Catholic Church runs the golden thread of that chivalrous spirit. All over the Catholic Church is the glow of that chivalrous love. It beats in the very pulse of her life-blood, and is the very throb of the

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Church's heart. It is the echo to the words in to-day's gospel: "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God."

Each baptized child is made God's soldier under a red-cross banner. It is our King and our liege Lord and Master Who has gone before us into the thick of the fray.

" Press forward as Thou wilt,
Heart of my King!
Though, all around, the sounds
Of battle ring!
Though in the thickest fight
Thy path should be,
Lead where Thou wilt, and I
Will follow Thee."

In the deadly fight with the world, the flesh, and the devil, man has not been left to skirmish without visible commanders, or to go blindly forward among pitfalls and ambushes, where every step may be into the jaws of certain death. The Catholic Church is a regular army, perfectly organized, with its known and acknowledged commander, its generals and officers, its marshalled rank and file, its complete law and order. The armies of heaven are its type and pattern. Our Holy Father in Rome is the vicegerent of the great King of kings and Lord of lords. The Almighty Ruler of time and eternity has given us a visible representative of His majesty and an infallible interpreter of His will. It is for us to follow that vicegerent "whither he goeth, and never desert him, knowing that his cause is the cause of God."

But are we to follow him only? Are you and I to wait to hear that one voice speak to us singly, and to walk only where our eyes see him, and to feel ourselves authorized to cavil and question every one else?

It is absurd on the face of it. Could the unequalled army of the Catholic Church have ever been banded together, had there been no discipline of the ranks, no

obedience to subordinate officers, no loyal unquestioning love and reverence for any authority except the very highest authority? Impossible! No community, no school, no family, could exist in peace and harmony thus; and a man who should presume to make such an assertion in matters of worldly interest would lay himself open to instant distrust. But to argue thus in spiritual matters, — ah! what can one who presumes to do so, know of the Church of God and of the Holy Spirit of God?

Consider this truth: One divine Spirit, one superhuman Intelligence, one unfailing Wisdom, one Light wherein is no darkness, is to the Catholic Church what the soul is to the body, — its life, its very existence. No part is without that Spirit. Without that Spirit, it would be a dead Church, and not the magnificent, conquering, *living* Church it is. Living in every faculty of its being. Living because in it are bishops, priests, deacons, the seven orders of its great hierarchy; the religious orders in their amazing, banded organizations; the missionaries the wide world over, wherever the battle sounds loudest, and the wild fight with sin is thickest; the teaching brothers and sisters, and the scholars who are taught before everything else the knowledge and service of God. Living because all are *one*, are *loyal*, are *obedient*, each to his separate leader, and each separate leader to his superior, and each superior to his general, and each general — each pastor, abbot, bishop, archbishop, cardinal — to the great head at Rome; and *all*, to the one Divine Spirit informing and inflaming all.

Magnificent union, of which the union of our beloved country is only a feeble, though a remarkable, type! Magnificent union, the vision of which thrills us with awe as well as with rapture, when we see it plainly at last, we who at last do see it, after years of doubt and confusion spent outside the secure fold of the Catholic Church! And oh! the

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sense of loyal love that overwhelms the true heart that does see it ! Shall we count steps, or time, or life for the Church, our mother ? Shall we count steps, or time, or life for the bishops and priests who give life and all to her ? Shall we doubt and cavil and question, when the right and the joy of an unquestioning trust is ours ?

Let us obey, each one in his place, with the faith of a little child and the loyal heart of a true knight of God. *To serve God is to reign.* All else is bondage itself. With the cry on our lips, "Deus vult — God wills it !" let us press forward, till religion is the very breath of our life, and God is truly our All, and all are one in Him. As to-day's gospel bids us, let us seek first the kingdom of God.

LIFE BY THE SPIRIT

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

AT the beginning of the Christian era, in a province which now lies within the country of Kurdistan, there reigned a certain prince named Izates. He had, before coming to the throne, made the acquaintance of a pious Jew named Ananias, and through him had learned to honor the God of the Hebrews. On mounting the throne, his virtue appeared so great that his brother Monobazes and his mother Helen wished to embrace the faith which he had learned ; and the mother even left her native country, in order to live close to Jehovah's temple. She was dwelling there when a great famine ravaged Jerusalem, and her generous deeds won marked praise. She ordered corn from Egypt, dried figs from Cyprus, and her sons sent to the Holy City sums of money so large that their relatives found fault. And then Monobazes made this answer which

has been handed down in the Talmud, and is worthy of preservation in Christian hearts :—

“My fathers laid up treasures for earth : I lay up treasures for heaven. . . . A thousand dangers imperilled their riches ; mine I place where they are secure forevermore. . . . Their goods produced nothing ; mine bear fruit. . . . They heaped up riches ; I am gathering souls.”

Tradition and these noble words unite in giving the hope that this generous family went on from grace to grace, and received the light of the Christian faith. Certainly they have offered to Christians a striking example of the right use of riches and power.

The epistle of to-day exhorts us, if we live in the Spirit to walk in the Spirit ; and following upon this exhortation come those powerful words of warning, which thrill the thoughtful soul with a sense of awe and fear :

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the Spirit, of the Spirit shall reap life everlasting.”

Suppose the things of this world were ended, and the final day of retribution and wrath were come.

One sure day, one wrathful day,
All the world shall melt away,
David and the Sybil say.

What a trembling earth shall know,
When the mighty Judge shall go,
Strictest judgment to bestow !

Marvellous the trumpet's sound
That from regions underground
Summons all His throne around.

How accurately do the Scriptures and theologians describe it, that nevertheless indescribable day, which stands

by itself, unparalleled, alone ; with its fire from heaven, "like a gorgeous tempest, the glorious, the jubilant, the vindictive fire" ; with its great Cross visible in the sky, and borne by angels. Not one angel, so they tell us, will be left in heaven. The trumpets will sound, those terrible, all-penetrating trumpets ; and earth and sea will give up their dead. And we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

And then?

What things a man shall sow those also shall he reap.

As we read this, sitting in the calm and quiet of our homes, does no pang like an arrow pierce our secret souls with the barbed question : And what things are they that I sow? Am I sowing in the Spirit, that in the Spirit I may reap eternal life? Charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity, — these are the fruits of the Spirit : are they also mine?

Let us go, quietly and alone, to our crucifix ; kneel there, and look up steadily at the Sacred Heart. In the wound of that Heart is the nest of the Dove. In Jesus Christ, our perfect pattern, the Spirit's fruits are found abundantly and in their full perfection. What do we see in Him?

Ah, my brothers ! it may be that gazing upon Him in silence, away from the world and the loves and cares of the world, with the awful fear of the judgment upon us, we cannot look long for weeping. Thank God if He grant us tears, when we gaze on the Crucified ! Yet, bid the eyes of our souls gaze steadfastly, and centre our hearts upon Him ; then ask : Is my life patterned on His life? Am I living the life of His Spirit?

In these our times of unrest and excitement, of haste to get rich, and of ambition for notoriety, if all who call them-

selves Christians would spend five minutes daily before the cross of Christ, and ask these questions as they shall wish they had asked them when the last day really comes, would life be what it is? The poor might begin to prize their poverty, looking on Him and loving Him Who was poorer once than they; and the rich might begin to store their riches where alone they would last forever, if before the cross they realized that their Jesus still lives and suffers in the person of His poor.

"Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do." Still, through all the ages, the cry of those divine lips, pallid in death, calls to the Father for mercy. For all of us — those who are rich in our selfish forgetfulness, those who are poor in our forgetful repining — the merciful plea is repeated: "They know not what they do." Many a gifted soul in this country is poorer than our poorest in the gifts of the Spirit, in knowledge of the true faith, and of the Church of the living God. Let our prayers go up mightily that in all of us her children the fruits of the Spirit shall be found full and fair to the eyes of men, so that they shall flock to the Church of Peter as the sheep flock to their fold, and there find their haven and their home.

A QUEEN'S JUBILEE

FEAST OF OUR LADY'S NATIVITY

ON September eighth we keep Our Lady's birthday. We can fancy how on earth the divine Child Jesus used to come to His Mother, that day, with tenderest greetings, lavishing upon her that unimaginable filial love of a Son Who was God, and Who was none other than Love itself. Their earthly lot was one of poverty and obscurity, but

angels must have thronged their humble dwelling, and our own loving instinct tells us that they sang birthday songs that her holy ears could hear, and that all her spiritualized senses, untrammelled by the slightest sin, received delights, that day, that all earth's wealth could never buy. In the Holy Family was perfectly exemplified Our Lord's own saying (He having Himself experienced the truth of what He taught), "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They might have cried out to us, as one of their most ardent followers, a true lover of the cross, cried later: —

"Oh, that spiritual men knew how they are losing the blessings and fulness of the Spirit, merely because they will not raise up their desires above trifles; and how they might have the sweetness of all things in the pure food of the Spirit — of which the manna was a figure — if they would only abstain from tasting other food."

The simple joys of nature and of home were theirs, even though they knew the trials of exile and arduous journeying, footsore and weary and hungry, in alien lands. Everywhere they had God with them, their all in all; everywhere they were in the world He fashioned, under the sky He made. We who love all things which our dear ones touch should comprehend something of what nature's beauty meant to those great and holy hearts, that saw in nature everywhere the handiwork of their best beloved One.

Perhaps the Child Jesus used to bring to His immaculate Mother on her birthday the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley twined in fragrant nosegays, or a bunch of large grapes from the vineyard and a yellow handful of the graceful wheat. We can imagine how He gave them, smiling with divinest gladness, while prophecies, that she needed no words to interpret, were written in the yearning rapture of His marvellous eyes. Those eyes saw ever the vision of

heaven, and of all men's souls and sins, and the price they cost.

The use is inestimable of the devotion to the Infant Jesus, to the Holy Child of Bethlehem and Nazareth. It serves to keep the Christian's faith strong in the doctrine that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. It helps to keep our naturally proud hearts humble and gentle, and brimful of love to God and man. From the time of Mary and Joseph to St. Francis of Assisi, from him onward to St. Francis de Sales, and from him to his present poet-follower in the Catholic faith, this simplicity of heart is seen in those who kneel around the manger and the home of the "Lamb-Child."

"When Christ the Lamb was born,
Full many a little lamb
Upon the wintry hill forlorn
Was nestled near its dam.

"And, waking or asleep,
Upon His mother's breast,
For love of her, each mother sheep
And baby lamb He blessed."

For love of her He celebrates with His angel hosts in heaven, now, His Mother's birthday; and His true Church keeps it likewise here on earth. Up there, faith sees her throned beside the true Solomon, Whose glories surpass all that the Queen of Sheba ever saw, and Who, in heaven, honors His mother, being the perfect pattern to His creatures in this commandment as in all besides.

We see heaven's choirs in radiant procession pass before her, singing, "Salve, Regina! Salve, Regina!" to the queen of that eternal kingdom where Christ, her Son, is King. We hear the cohorts of the martyrs proclaim her queen of martyrs, whose sufferings surpassed all other martyrdoms when she stood beneath the cross, bearing in her mother-heart the slow torture of her only Son's long anguish and

Passion. We see them lay at her feet heaven's red roses and the victor's laurel and the triumphant palm, for their birthday offering. Next the virgin souls who follow the Lamb whither He goeth, bring to the virgin Mother, virgin of virgins, ever immaculate and untainted, the whitest and fairest lilies that grow beside the crystal sea. Then the little innocent children, with baptismal dew in eternal light upon their happy faces, gather up those birthday garlands in their sinless fingers. (If their mothers could but see them, they would never weep for them again.) They lay them in their heavenly Mother's lap, and crown her hair, and fill her hands, and laugh for joy to see her smile of love, this Mother of all mothers who, in the midst of her joy, remembers with most availing pity their earthly mothers' woe.

Meanwhile, the divinest voice is heard, as though the true Solomon sang His own surpassing Canticle of Canticles, tuned to a key where all that is harmonious in earth and heaven combine : —

“Thou art all fair, My beloved, and there is not a spot in thee. Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come.”

Then, hand in hand, as they often walked on earth, this second Adam and Eve go onward in a grand jubilee procession of all heaven's glorious hosts, the first Adam and Eve following closely their greater Son. Under the tree of life, and beside the river of endless life, they pass to the music of heaven's singing, and the Church on earth takes up the anthem, and echoes it in her Divine Office for this queen's jubilee : — “Hail, holy parent, who didst bring forth the King Who rules heaven and earth forever.” Or again, as on her first fair feast of her Immaculate Conception : —

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for He hath clothed me with the garments

of salvation, and with the robe of justice hath He covered me, as a bride adorned with her jewels. I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me."

STRENGTHENED BY HIS SPIRIT

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ST. AUGUSTINE has taught us in one of his sermons that sometimes when God seems to delay in answering our prayers, He is only enhancing the value of the gift, He is not refusing it. By seeking and praying, we become more sure of obtaining. God keeps for us what He does not will to grant us speedily, in order that we may learn *to desire great things greatly*.

These words of the illustrious doctor agree well with the epistle for the sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, wherein St. Paul, the apostle of the Holy Ghost, as we may name him, and the spiritual father of St. Augustine in things divine, cries out in his vehement, impetuous fashion:—

"I pray you not to faint at my tribulations for you, *which is your glory*. For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man."

There are no petitions here for release from pain. Once indeed, he had begged, in sore extremity, to be freed from trial, and the only answer vouchsafed him was: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity." Thenceforth he declared that he would glory in his infirmities, and take pleasure in reproaches and distresses, for Christ's sake! Over and over again through his epistles

rings out the same clarion cry, the expression of his loyal and knightly nature.

"I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us. If God be for us, who is against us? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it: Why hast thou made me thus? — I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. — All things are yours, whether it be Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; for all are yours: and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

This is a man who indeed knew how to desire greatly great things! He had not been among the twelve when the place in which they were was shaken by the unearthly wind of the Spirit, and upon their heads descended the Living Flame of love and strength. A modern writer says that this descent of the Holy Spirit was indeed a baptism of fire, consuming in the apostles all that was impure, enkindling their hearts with such zeal that they were ready from that moment to dare all things for Him whom they had once so miserably abandoned; God's Spirit flowing over them, and sweeping into the inmost recesses of their souls, took possession of their faculties, even making them His mouthpiece.

But to this new apostle, small of stature, feeble in health, his bodily presence weak, his speech — men said — contemptible; to this convert, his life a daily death, harassed by temptation, borne down yet never conquered by trial and care; to this Paul, the Holy Spirit had come, alone, resistless, all conquering, and made him His peculiar servant, patron forever to all servants of the Holy Ghost.

Do you imagine that, after this, St. Paul, so wonderfully saved, so divinely called, could be satisfied with less than God! that he could ever do aught else than desire great things greatly, pressing to the prize of his calling with never a

backward glance, counting all things loss if so he might win Christ? Yet — should not this also be true of us?

Reckon up what we desire greatly, you and I? Let us be truthful with ourselves, as one day we shall have to be, whether we will or no. What is that great desire on which our hearts are bent?

Let us suppose we answer, though it bring the blush to our faces. Ease, money, love, or position; release from trial, disgrace, disease, bereavement; whatever it be, let us speak it out, unflinching, to this great apostle of love and zeal. Listen again to his brave, steadfast assertion: "I will glory in my infirmities! I reckon that our sufferings are *not worthy to be compared* with the glory to come." Then beseech him to pray for us the fervent prayer that we may be strengthened by the Spirit *with might*.

If all our paltry mortal desires could be granted us, would we not quickly exchange them for this priceless gift of inward strength? Let us then beg it of Almighty God. Strength to serve Him as soldiers serve their leader; as men truly noble follow a lofty ambition or high ideal; nay, more, — the supernatural strength to serve Him as the saints serve their Master, with glad loyalty, even to the death.

They tell of Blessed Henry Suso that it seemed as if Jesus was always so visibly present to his mind that he was as one who walked in body by our Lord's side in even the smallest action of his daily life; sleeping, rising, eating, preaching, or praying, his heart was wholly turned to his Divine Master and to the most perfect way of imitating Him. "When a man has died to self, and begun to live in Christ, it is well with him," such was one of his maxims. Were we redeemed at a less price than he? Was a less love shown to us, that we cannot walk daily thus beside our Lord? Is not the same divine power ready to strengthen us with a like strength by the Spirit of love and flame?

God grant us to forget self, to forget the low, sordid, sensual aims of our time and day ! God grant us a nobler standard, holier gifts, and the grace in all humility to desire greatly the great things of God !

OUR HIGH CALLING

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE feast of Our Lady's Seven Dolors and the feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis Assisi, both of which occur in September, recall to mind sorrowful mysteries ; yet they are accounted as festivals, the white and gold vestments are used, and we hear the exultant chant of the *Gloria in Excelsis*. What is the explanation of these contrasts ? We know that the Church does nothing without a deep, underlying reason of beauty as well as of truth ; nothing without a clear conviction of the exquisite fitness of spiritual and supernatural things. Now in the epistle for the seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost occur the words : "That you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called." In these words may be found one reason why these September days that are set apart for the remembrance of Our Lady's sorrows and of St. Francis' mystical agony should, nevertheless, be festivals.

Each man among us has his vocation, his calling to a certain path in life, destined for him by the infinite, unerring wisdom of his Creator. These paths are widely different, for the Divine Voice calls in myriad ways. One man may mount a throne with St. Louis, another may live like the poorest beggar with St. Benedict Joseph Labre, a third may pray and study in the cloister with the Venerable Bede, a fourth may wear out his days in parochial toil with

the holy Curé of Ars, a fifth may fulfil many years in a short time with the boy-students Stanislaus, Aloysius, and Berchmans. All that matters not. The one thing needful is, as the wise Bishop of Geneva says, to do the will of God, even though that will should be to herd swine all our life, or to do the most abject thing in the world.

Yes, the paths themselves matter little, so far as the things of this world go. King or swineherd, soldier or student, bishop or acolyte, we shall pass into God's presence when death calls, leaving royal sceptre and beggar's staff, sword and book, crosier and bell, behind us. The thing important then will be, whether we walked worthy of the vocation wherewith we were called.

Look up for a moment now to the blessed company gathered around the great white throne to-day. They stand there, a multitude whom no man can number, serving day and night in that eternal temple, unwearying in their service as the mystic hours glide by. Hunger and thirst shall nevermore be known by them, no glare or heat of the sun shall smite them, they shall never know disease or pain or death. Misery is forgotten, or remembered only as the waters that are passed away. Crowned with fadeless glory, and robed in immaculate whiteness, their glad eyes lifted to the radiant Vision, they stand there, all alive and thrilling with intensest, holiest rapture that shall never cease.

Centuries ago, the disciple who lay on the Lord's breast at supper, yet had to linger longest from him after the Ascension, St. John, the exile at Patmos, and the doctor of the Apocalyptic Vision, looked upward, and, even while clad in mortal flesh, beheld that wondrous heaven, in part unveiled to him. And behold, one of the Ancients spake to him: "These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they?" To whom the beloved disciple only answered meekly: "My lord, thou knowest."

Then to his deep humility this revelation was vouchsafed. Let us mark it well, for the secret of to-day's mystery is hidden here.

"He said to me, These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple."

Whatever our vocation may be, whatever calling in life is ours, one thing is the lot of us all — to suffer. Hard, grinding, not to be escaped, and at times, we think, almost intolerably the anguish seizes us. Suffering is now the lot of fallen man. How many of us walk worthy of this vocation wherewith we are called?

This Sunday, as we gaze in awe upon St. Francis, pallid with fasting, absorbed in prayer, kneeling on Monte Alverno with arms outstretched, his eyes and his heart drawn away from all things earthly to the love of the Crucified, we seem to see the winged seraph flash athwart his vision, and print the mystical wounds on hands and feet and side. Then, holier yet than he, more united to God, we see the Blessed Virgin, deluged in grief, clothed as it were with anguish, participating in every suffering of her divine and sorrow-laden Son. Do we hear one sigh of complaint, one word that does not breathe of resignation, of utter submission to the will of God?

Walking worthy of their high vocation, they pass onward, over the thorny road that leads to heaven. The way of the Cross is the royal road, the King's highway. They who tread it worthily cease to care for this world's goods and joys, for this world's standard, judgments, or opinions. A higher and truer standard is theirs, the will of God. The echo of an angel's voice sounds ever in their heaven-rapt hearing: —

"These — these are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Do we know now why the Church keeps a festival in memory of Our Lady's Dolors and St. Francis' mystic pain? Do we comprehend now why a saint has said that the soul that really longs for the Divine Wisdom, longs first of all for the sufferings of the Cross, that it may enter in? On this season's Ember Days of fast and prayer, let us beseech God to teach us this great and practical lesson, and to help us indeed to walk worthy of this our high calling; for "the most pure suffering leads to the most pure and deepest knowledge, and consequently to the purest and highest joy."

PATIENT WAITING

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

IN the gospel for the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost we are told of a certain man sick of the palsy, a paralyzed man, who, being brought to our Blessed Lord, was healed by Him. "Arise," He said to the sufferer in his extreme helplessness, "take up thy bed, and go into thy house." This miracle of bodily healing was wrought, in order that men might know "that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

The diseases of the body and the ills of our mortal frame prove, upon reflection, to be types of the trials and troubles of our spiritual life. We talk of blindness, deafness, fever, debility, paralysis; but how often do the eyes of man's soul seem actually blind to spiritual things, and the ears of his soul deaf to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit; how often a fever of ambition for gain or power lays hold of

him ; how weak he becomes in the daily struggle between good and evil ! So true is this, that we speak in common parlance of the soul's diseases ; we call the priest the soul's physician ; and one of the seven Sacraments is peculiarly the Sacrament of healing, wherein we lay bare our spiritual maladies and wounds before one who is trained to use spiritual probe and scapel, to apply spiritual salve and balm, and to do what no doctor of the body has power to do with the lifeless clay, — restore life to the dead soul with these mighty words : “ *Ego absolvo te* ” — “ I absolve thee ! ”

A painful disease of the soul, which has been fittingly called spiritual paralysis, is plainly brought before us by to-day's gospel. And in speaking of this, we must remember that the soul's diseases are by no means always sins. Very frequently they are crosses like any other cross, means of purification, of sanctification, even of illumination. In their severest form, they are perhaps the very heaviest trial that can be inflicted upon man. It was an interior, a spiritual suffering, that caused our Blessed Lord to cry out in supreme anguish upon His death-bed of accumulated woes.

Many of us have experienced spiritual paralysis in one degree or another, and found it very hard to bear, a source of keen mortification as well as of pain. The way grows dark before us, we cannot tell how to walk or where to go, and we think that even if we saw, we could not or would not move ; we say to ourselves, or we complain to God, that our *will-power* is paralyzed. Advice is given us, and we forget it ; help is offered us, and we have no strength to use it ; the experience of others never seems to fit our case exactly, and the ability fails to express our sufferings so that another can understand. We are conscious that He Who made us sees and comprehends all, but we think we are not worth His pity, and that we have become a burden

to every one about us, and a cross and trial to ourselves, all hope and energy gone.

We suppose and trust that the intensity and duration of this peculiar trial as experienced by St. Teresa, the Venerable Émélie de Rodat, Monsieur Olier, and Père Surin, are unusual; but, in some degree or other, many and many a soul is called to pass through it, and to shudder afterward at the remembrance. Sometimes it is a young heart, longing to know its vocation; sometimes the vocation seems clear enough, but the way to follow it is blocked; sometimes, and worst of all, we think we are paralyzed, heart, mind, and will, entirely through our own fault.

Poor soul! in these dark and dreadful days, that lengthen out, God knows, into darker nights, and on into years more full of dread, what shalt thou do? Shalt thou lose heart, sink down in mortal despair, and die? For, often, what may come after death seems less bitter by far than this. Yet what have others done, who were in like case with thee, "crazed with waste life and unavailing days"?

Long ago, out of such depths, the psalmist cried to God, and Job uttered his sad complaints, and Paul besought relief. Like thee, Thomas à Kempis in his grief exclaimed: "May it please Thee, O Lord! to deliver me; for, poor wretch that I am! what can I do, and whither shall I go, without Thee?"

But, to this method of consolation, the soul makes answer desperately that it is by no manner of means either David, or Job, or Paul, or à Kempis; it is only a mean, contemptible, worse than useless object, a living commentary on the poet's words:—

"I am in all a weak degraded thing,
Save in the sight thereof, where strength doth sting."

Let us grant that this self-accusation is literally true; and in some sense it is true of the most of men at

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times. Yet what is the beautiful petition of the introit of to-day?

“Give peace, O Lord, to those who patiently wait for Thee.”

So, out of the depths, the psalmist cried: “I have waited for Thee, O Lord.” So Job said: “Though He should kill me, I will trust in Him.” And Paul in to-day’s epistle speaks of those to whom nothing is wanting in any grace, *waiting* for the manifestation of our Lord.

If thou thinkest thyself all paralyzed and dead, poor soul! and that thou hast in thyself no power to will, canst thou not at least strive to wait patiently with these?

Say to thy God: “I am nothing, and worse than nothing; I seem to myself all misery and all sin. Yet will I never let Thee go. My will is dead; but with this frozen heart I force my tongue at least to say: I give myself to Thee. In Thine own time, Thine own way, Thine infinite mercy, have pity at last and save.” So praying, and patiently waiting, thy God will surely give to thee, hoping against hope, eternal peace.

A GARDEN OF ROSES

FIRST SUNDAY IN OCTOBER — ROSARY SUNDAY

I KNOW a land where all the year the roses blow, fragrant and fair; white, purer than the new fallen snow, gold like the glow of sunset, crimson with a stain like the Precious Blood. No storms hinder their blooming, no heat withers them; they blossom even more thickly in tempests, and are fairer for the heat. Men twine them in garlands, and call them “the Rosary,” and lay them at all hours and at all seasons before the shrine of Mary in the great garden of the Catholic Church.

The devotion is a constant puzzle to the non-Catholic ; an unfailing daily delight and solace to the Catholic. Time, as it passes, only develops its inexhaustible treasures, and reveals more of its beauty. In Tennyson's remarkable poem, "Morte D'Arthur," the great King, dying, says : —

"If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me, night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
For so the whole round earth is everywhere
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

Each rosary is one of these golden chains, each is a ladder to lift souls heavenward, each is an instrument of music set to angelic notes. It is suited to all sorts of prayer, to all kinds of souls. A thoroughly vocal prayer in itself, each decade is, nevertheless, a meditation. By the five joyful mysteries, those white roses of the Divine Childhood, — by the five sorrowful mysteries, those red roses of the Passion, — by the five glorious mysteries, those golden-hued roses of the heavenly and immortal glory surrounding and following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, — these events are all brought before us, and form the scenes of countless meditations. And lastly the contemplative, "by the one thought of God possessed," is aided to keep that Presence more completely before him by the naming and re-naming of the same holy and sweet words.

The freedom of mind and soul in saying the rosary is something which must be experienced in order to be appreciated. A man is at Mass, saying his beads, his eyes fixed on the altar. How can any one not a Catholic guess what he is doing? He says the third joyful decade, the birth of

Christ, or the fifth sorrowful, His crucifixion ; the Mass-bell rings for the consecration, — Christ is born again, is immolated again, for sinful men. He pours out his heart in thanksgiving, in intercession, in joy, in sorrow — the same words, the thousand thoughts, like a musician at the organ, evoking a myriad themes from the few notes, the ivory keys.

All the year, and every week, and every day, by means of the rosary we read Christ's history over and over, dwell with Him at Nazareth, seek Him with Mary and Joseph, tread His Way of the Cross, count His sufferings, share in His resurrection, rise in His ascension, feel the Holy Ghost descend, watch Mary enter heaven, behold the reward awaiting every faithful soul. At Christmas the angelic song chimes with it ; on Fridays, as the beads slip between our fingers slowly, we hear, like a mournful echo to them, drop by drop, the falling of the tide of Precious Blood ; at Pentecost they ring out to meet the rushing mighty wind from heaven ; in Advent they echo to the last trumpet's call.

And oh ! beside the grave and over our dead, who shall describe their power of consolation ! "Prayer is the dew of Purgatory," said that holy soul, Eugénie de Guérin ; but the rosary is rain rather than dew in its copious abundance of power to refresh. Think of the treasury of indulgences, and all these sacred indulgences falling gently into purgatory, going straight like angel visitants to the suffering souls, with food for their hunger, water for their thirst, cool winds to allay the heat. We who understand all this have our own key to enter the realm of the waiting dead ; we walk along its solemn avenues, talk with those who are loved and gone, and feel our own souls grow whiter as we converse with theirs.

They who thoroughly love the rosary and know the rosary are never lonely. With it in their clasp, even here they dwell in heaven and join the songs of saints and angels ;

even here, time and space vanish; they are with their absent, with their departed, with their Catholic brethren unknown to sight the wide world over; and ever and forever with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in unspeakable union with God. How holy the lives should be of us who say a million times over and over the sacred names that ravish heaven: Jesus and Mary, Jesus and Mary, Holy Divine Redeemer, Mother immaculate and undefiled!

Holiness becometh Thy house, O God! forever. They keep in Rome, jewel-encrested and gold-enshrined, the crib that held the Infant Jesus, and the cross whereon He died. Centuries ago, the knights of Arthur left his palace, to go in quest of the "Holy Grail" of the Last Supper. The legend says that still, in some blest spot, known to God only, a chapel stands, veiled in mysterious shadow, —

"Shrining the Cup that Christ once kissed,
The Cup that held the Eucharist.
No mortal man might pass unseen,
The sentinels of this Paradise,
Who pace all day, with tireless eyes
And feet, the encircling hills of green.
His angels keep with fiery sword
This sanctuary of the Lord."

That crib at Rome few of us perhaps will see, nor that cross till the angels lift it in the skies for all men to behold it on the final day of doom; and none now find like Galahad the hidden path to the Chapel of the Holy Grail, for "the Lord's secrets are His own." But the sacred mysteries of the rosary lie in the grasp of every child of the Catholic Church. My God! how holy should we be! Yet — *what are we?*

Ah! mystery of mysteries! the rosary with its beauty of holiness is primarily for sinners. The breaking heart, bruised, contrite, bleeding, the tempted heart, the defiled,

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the fallen, each finds its voiceless cry made plain and audible there to the ear of God :—

“Hail, Mary, full of grace ! the Lord is with thee ; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God ! pray for *us sinners*, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

DETACHMENT

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

A SAINT'S opinion of a saint is calculated to excite deep interest in Christian minds, and when the saint who speaks is such an one as the gentle Bishop of Geneva, bred to courts and castles, and the saint of whom he speaks is none other than the great hermit of lifelong austerity, John the Baptist, our interest deepens.

“I wish,” says St. Francis de Sales, “to invite you to look upon a very *sun*, upon a true spirit, frank and free from all entanglement, and which held only to God's will. I have often thought, what was the greatest mortification of all the saints whose lives I am acquainted with ? and, after many considerations, I think the greatest was this. St. John the Baptist went into the desert at the age of five years, and knew that our Saviour and his was born quite near to him. God knows how the heart of St. John, touched with the love of his Saviour from his mother's womb, must have desired to enjoy His holy presence. He, nevertheless, passed twenty-five years in the desert without once coming to see our Lord ; and he waited for Him to come to him. After this, having baptized our Lord, he does not follow Him, but remains to fulfil his duty. O God, what mortification of spirit ! To be so near his Saviour, and not to see Him !

To have Him so close at hand, and not to enjoy Him ! And what was this but to have his spirit disengaged of everything, and even of God, in order to do the will of God, and to serve Him ? To leave God for God, and to deprive himself of God in order to love Him so much the better and the more purely ? This example overwhelms my mind with its greatness."

On this Sunday, when the collect asks that we, "being freed both in body and mind, may with ready heart accomplish those things that God commands," let us turn to this very sun, this true spirit, and learn of him what it is to be frank, and free from all entanglement, and to hold only to God's will. For such a state is beyond expression blessed, a life that is angelic, a heaven on earth.

The attachments of human nature are very strong. We become attached to certain places, friends, plans, methods of action, even to certain tastes and fancies, till without them life seems dull and miserable. And a man's attachment to his life and to his own will is deeply rooted and intense. Here, however, was a man so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of detachment, that although he was a saint, and moreover was sanctified even before his birth, and therefore loved God with extraordinary devotion, yet he was content to be without the sensible presence of the God he loved ; he was willing to lose his own innocent will in the superior will of the Almighty ; and finally he was glad to give up his life in martyrdom, even at the whim of a dancing-girl.

Oh ! to learn the secret of this sweet, complete abandonment to the sovereign will of the all-wise, all-loving Lord !

"What is a cross ?" said a priest one day. "If I put my fingers so" — laying one across the other — "that is a cross. But if I put them so" — laying them side by side — "where is the cross ?" Only let our will run side by side with God's

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will, and our trials will become less heavy as surely as day follows the night.

The Venerable John of Avila's words were as true as they were emphatic, that "he who gives himself to God must have a lion's heart"; yet when once that gift is made, complete and irrevocable, the lion's strength comes with it. More than that, Samson's words are made good in a thousand ways, and "out of the strong comes forth sweetness." Time and again the peculiar bitterness of our trials results from our not seeing in them the will of God; or, more truly, from our not loving in them that blessed will. "Thorns give forth balm, and the cross sweetness," said that modern master of penance and detachment, the Curé of Ars; "but we must squeeze the thorns to our hands, and press the cross to our hearts, to make them distil the fragrance which is within them."

Instead, we stand moaning and wringing our hands in our blindness, crying out to Him Who knows us far better than we know ourselves, to Him Who will never lay upon us any burden beyond our strength to carry, to Him Who one dread day bore all men's burdens along a dolorous way, uncomplaining, deserted, and alone. And the cry from our poor ignorant hearts is too often this: "Any other cross, dear Lord! any other than the one Thou sendest me."

We want to pick and choose our crosses, or to have no cross at all. This companion, this neighbor, is too disagreeable and unsympathetic; this insult is too sharp to endure; this disgrace or misunderstanding is too deep a degradation; this separation, this death, is too bitter. We do not say the terrible words plainly, but the words we do say imply them, that God, Who is omniscient, has made a great mistake in sending us a cross like this. If He would but let us have the selection, each for himself!

All the time that we are complaining, an angel veiled in

shadows stands before us, holding the cross our Lord Himself once bore. It needs but seven words from our quivering lips, "Not my will, O Lord, but Thine !" it needs but the resolute and daily exercise of the blessed grace of detachment, practised in the holy fear and love of God ; and the angel of crosses and sacrifice will become for us the angel of peace.

There is a joy which the world knows, born of self-gratification and the craving for this world's goods ; a sting lurks in it, and whatever else it brings, it never brings the gift of peace. There is a joy which the saints know ; and those who strive after sanctity will also taste that calm delight. It comes when we have learned to see behind the cross the angel who brings it ; when we have learned that each trial we have to bear is a "kiss of the crucifix" and a spiritual communion ; and that the more we detach ourselves from all but God, and especially from our own wills and wishes, the more will God attach Himself to us, and fill us with perfect peace.

THANKFUL HEARTS

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE epistle for the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost says to us : "Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord ; giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father."

The duty of thanksgiving, of gratitude, of recognition of benefits, is a more important one than some people seem to think. So important is it, in fact, that Father Faber reckons it among what he calls the peculiar "flowers" of

- all devotions to the Sacred Infancy and the Blessed Sacrament. They are five in number: joy, adoration, gratitude, simplicity, and the hidden life. How many of us would have dreamed of reckoning gratitude among them? Any and all of the four others would have come more naturally to mind. We may reasonably suspect that it is a virtue which those who are particularly devout to the Blessed Sacrament are wont to find increasing to a marked degree in their characters, and that Father Faber knew this through his own spiritual experience and that of others whose souls were open to him.

He says that gratitude is a virtue peculiarly noticeable in all the saints, and that it is not a characteristic of modern society. And he uses this very strong expression: "If a man were shown me who had a long memory for little kindnesses, who never seemed out of debt in his affections, who exaggerated his obligations to others, kept anniversaries of them, and repaid them twenty times over, I should be more struck with the likelihood of his turning out a saint than if I heard that he disciplined himself to blood daily, slept on the bare boards, enjoyed the prayer of quiet, had been scourged by devils, and had seen our Blessed Lady. Alas! we forget the ten lepers, and the nine that were ungrateful; or in these days of self-praise and self-importance, we are like Ezechias, when God had given him a sign, — 'he did not render again according to the benefits which he had received; for his heart was lifted up.'"

How can we show gratitude to Almighty God? Ought we not rather to say, How can we ever cease to show it? Where find a limit to our thanksgiving? The Church shows us a way, in her holy habit of setting apart special feasts that remind us of God's love and many favors. October, the month of the holy angels, for instance, recalls to us His goodness in granting to each of us a holy angel-guide: —

“My earliest friend, mine from the day
When first I drew my breath;
My latest friend, who shall be mine,
Unfailing, to my death.”

Our very keeping of the month and of the various festivals of the holy angels is an act of gratitude, and of practical recognition of God's goodness and of their watchful and tireless care over us. So, too, with all feasts of our Blessed Lady and of the saints, we thank God for their good examples, for their availing intercession, for their love; above all, for *His* love in making them what they are, and in giving them to us as our beloved brothers and sisters in the communion of the saints and the fellowship of the household of God. Especially in the great days which commemorate and celebrate the events in the earthly life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we render thanks for those inestimable benefits to our needy race.

But this is not all. Every day we should thank God for His care over us in the previous night; every night, before we fall asleep, we should thank Him for all His many benefits through the long day of toil, of study, of temptation, of care, of many joys, of many trials.

We should thank Him sometimes for the things He has kept us from doing, things we wanted to do that would have wrought us harm; thank Him even for trial, pain, loss, chastisement, disappointment. As Father Faber says, in one of his helpful and sweet hymns:—

“I thank Thee, Lord, for this kind check
To spirits over-free,
And for all things that make me feel
More helpless need of Thee.”

And so Cardinal Newman says:—

“I would not miss one pang austere,
Heart-throb or burning brow;
Bitter the chastisement severe,
Sweet is its memory now.”

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“ There let the fragrant scars abide,
Love-tokens in Thy stead, —
Faint shadows of the spear-pierced side
And thorn-encompassed head.”

The time may come when, even though our hearts are breaking, the first cry of our lips will be : “ Thank God. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Even in those hardest trials, caused by our own sins and failings, or the faults of our kindred and friends, we shall be able to find cause for gratitude in the memory of the truth that God is always ready to forgive, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy towards all who really turn to Him. If we cultivate a thankful heart, we shall find that we have not time enough for all we would say and do in grateful acknowledgment of God’s mercies, and we shall be glad to make this little prayer our own : —

“ I wish to thank Thee, and I can not. Do Thou, dearest Jesus, suffer me to speak with Thy lips, and to thank Thee with the thankfulness of Thy own Sacred Heart.”

This spirit of gratitude we must cultivate to all who do good to us, and especially to our spiritual benefactors, those who do good to our immortal souls. This is why we keep anniversaries, jubilees, birthdays, name-days. This is one reason why we have Masses said for our dead. All this is the cultivation of that grateful spirit which helps a man to become a saint, and which comes, as the epistle for to-day informs us, from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God.

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

WE think often of our Lord’s meekness and gentleness, His love for us, His compassion. Do we often think of His nobility?

What is nobility? Is it greatness of birth, of talent, of character? The nobility of the Heart of Jesus was something far other than these, though surely all these it had. Let the most careless and most worldly among us consider what a noble deed is.

On the battle-field of Zutphen, they brought to Philip Sidney, wounded to death, and the death-thirst upon him, a cup of cold water. He passed it from his own parched lips to a dying man beside him, with the simple and now famous words: "Thy necessity is greater than mine." He was a knight, you say, a courtier, a noble.

But, a century later, a wounded Danish burgher knelt down beside a wounded enemy, and poured into his mouth the draught meant for himself, with Sidney's very words. His reward was a pistol-shot from the dastardly foe. "Rascal!" cried the Dane, "I would have befriended you, and you would murder me in return! Now will I punish you. I would have given you the whole. Now you shall have only the half." Was the knight more noble than the burgher, though *Sir* did not precede the latter's name?

And what do we think of the Russian slave, who, of his own accord, sprang among the wolves, to slake their fury with his life-blood, while his master thus had time to speed his sleigh onward to safety? What of the helmsman of Lake Erie, who, in fearful agony, on the burning steamboat, held fast by the wheel, and so guided the boat and passengers to land? What of the engineer — in our own country also — who stayed on a wrecked train to reverse the engine, with certain death before him? When found, he was jammed in, unable to move, and being burnt to death; but even then he cried out to his would-be rescuers to keep away, as he feared the boiler would burst. And how forget the heroic woman, who, seeing a mad dog running towards her, carrying danger and death in his track,

stooped down and caught his head in her stout quilted skirts, and held him till help came?

Yet we might reasonably ask if one noble deed makes a character noble ; for the saying is a true one, that "manners are not idle, but the fruit of loyal nature and of noble minds." What does St. Francis tell us?

"Imagine," he writes to a young man of his day, "that you were a courtier of St. Louis. Well did the holy king like a man to be brave, courageous, generous, and good-humored, courteous, polite, candid, and refined ; but he liked him to be a Christian far better. Had you been near him you would have seen him laugh amiably when there was occasion for it, and speak out boldly when it was needful ; he would have taken care that all his surroundings were noble and dignified like a second Solomon, in order that the royal dignity might be kept up ; and a moment afterwards he would have been seen serving the poor in the hospitals ; in a word he joined civil virtue with Christian virtue, and allied majesty with humility. The truth is, one must understand that *no one should be less manly because he is a Christian, or less Christian because he is a man.*"

That is a sentence with the true ring to it, and the saint goes on to intensify it by saying that he means a really good Christian, very devout, very pious, and if possible very spiritual, because the spiritual man knows when, and in what order, and in what way, to practise each different virtue as required. As to-day's epistle says : "Take unto you the armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand perfect in all things."

I suppose the real test of Christian nobility lies in this ; — the making God, and nothing less than God, the centre and sun, the actual standard of our lives. That is what our dear Lord did from the first moment of His human life ; there was the keynote of His human existence, His watchword :

"Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God!" He loved His spotless Mother with indescribably tender affection; He loved each soul He died for, with a love no tongue can tell; but His love for God Almighty was beyond all else, and His being was laid in absolute devotion at God's throne. Not a moment of time, not a drop of blood, not a glance of the eye or thought of the brain, not a throb of the Sacred Heart, but with utmost and most glad loyalty was given, distinctly and magnificently, with full consent of every faculty of His perfect being, to the glory of the King of kings. Oh, to be filled with such nobility of soul! It is a gift of the Holy Ghost, formed of piety, justice, and fortitude.

Do you remember, in Aytoun's "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers," the passionate cry of the old soldier when "the Great Marquis died"? —

"Had I been there with sword in hand,
And fifty Camerons by,
That day through high Dunedin's streets
Had pealed the slogan-cry.
Not all their troops of trampling-horse,
Nor might of mailèd men,
Not all the rebels in the South
Had borne us backward then!
Once more his foot on Highland heath
Had trod as free as air,
Or I, and all who bore my name,
Were laid beside him there!"

That old chivalrous spirit had its prototype and example in Him Who is the Great Captain of all God's soldiers, and Who went before us, with the rough cross for His banner, into a deadlier fight with the enemy than any or all of us will ever have to meet. And it is that dauntless, loyal spirit that in these mercenary days we Catholics ought to show before the world. Shall we give less than blood for blood to such a Leader? *Noblesse oblige, noblesse oblige*. May we practise the grand old maxim towards our King!

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“Brethren !” cries the epistle for to-day, “be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power. Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. Take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect.”

A NOVENA FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY

THE twenty-fourth of October is the feast of the Archangel Raphael. One week from that day will be a fast day, the vigil of All Saints ; and November first will be that beautiful festival itself.

When our Blessed Lord had ascended into heaven, His beloved Mother and the apostles returned to Jerusalem, and spent the next nine days in prayer. Those nine days being ended, no less than God the Holy Ghost, personally and visibly, came down upon them.

Like them, devout Catholics, when any great feast is at hand, are accustomed to say some special prayers during the nine previous days, and to receive Holy Communion on the feast itself or during the octave, and this is called “making a Novena,” or a nine days' prayer. So let us make the Novena for All Saints' Day, and may the Angel Raphael guide us to the saints !

There is a peculiar fitness in this angel's guidance here. Let us lay our toil aside ; hush the anxious beating of our hearts into silence before God, the restful silence of prayer ; and think or imagine, whichever word you like to use, that suddenly our mortal eyes are made capable of beholding for half an hour what God sees all the time ; and that things usually invisible to us are unveiled. What would we then see, not afar off, but in this room where we are reading, in

the home familiar to us all our lives? There are still the father and the mother, the brothers and sisters; but beside each one is a majestic being, before whom we would fain hide our faces.

Hear how it was with the holy man Tobias and his holy son. They truly saw an angel, who said to them:—

“‘I am the Angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord.’

“And when they had heard these things, they were troubled; and being seized with fear, they fell upon the ground on their face.”

If we could see our Angel Guardian with his grave eyes fixed upon us, and yet, as we should know and feel, never losing sight of the God Whom every instant he serves perfectly and with unutterable devotion, would we dare, in that half hour and before that angel's gaze, to commit a single fault? And does not one great secret of the saints' holiness lie in their spiritual intensity, their overwhelming realization of spiritual things, so that to us they seem like the angels, to be “seeing Him Who is invisible”? With them, to love God *is* to love Him, and to love Him above all things. God first loved them; God died for them; they “cannot give God less than all.”

With David they cry: “My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God,” and with St. Augustine: “O God, it is Thou, Thou alone art the life which is so blessed: to live happy is to rejoice in Thee, on account of Thee, and for Thee.” With St. Francis of Assisi, hour by hour they go repeating: “My God and my All! my God and my All!” With St. Gertrude: “O Love, sweetest and most tender of loves! never hast Thou failed nor forsaken me, O my God, my Love, my Star of stars!” With the child Agnes: “The world and all the pomps thereof have I despised for Jesus Christ, my Lord.” And with St. Paul, the grand apostle of

the Holy Ghost, they join in that magnificent apostrophe which rings like a trumpet-call through all the ages of the Church :—

“Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . But in all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We open our eyes, and return to the dull, cold, visible world again. Ah, Lord God! can such poor wretches as we are, ever be saints like these? And from around the Throne an answer comes, from a great multitude whom none can number,—souls from all climes, with the angels who guarded them and brought them safe to heaven;—and their voices, like waves of a mighty sea, make answer : “Yes.”

It needs not to leave home for convent or mission, though when God calls to so glorious a calling, bless His holy name and gladly go; but the great Communion of Saints takes wider scope than that. “Only love God,” as the African doctor of divine love has taught us, “love God, and do what you will.”

Let the carpenter at his bench love Him, as Joseph loved Him, toiling there; let the beggar love Him with Alexis and Labre, the servant with Zina in the kitchen, the mother with Anna and Monica, the young girl with Agnes, and the sick with Lidwina.

There lies the key to the secret of sanctity, to that marvellous intensity of devotion possessed by the saints. Let us make our Novena for All Saints’ Day, that God the Holy

Ghost, the source of love, may fill our hearts. One day the answer will come. Perhaps after a long Novena of waiting, a dark vigil of patience, a harder fast and penance than the one day's fast before the coming feast. Yet let us pray on.

"The time may be delayed, the manner may be unexpected, but the answer is sure to come. Not a tear of sacred sorrow, not a breath of holy desire poured out in prayer to God, will ever be lost; but in God's own time and way it will be wafted back to us in clouds of mercy, and fall in showers of blessing on you and on those for whom you pray."

Hear our Blessed Lord speak words never enough dwelt upon in our prayers and thoughts: —

"If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?"

AN INFINITE HOPE

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

DO not a great many of our difficulties in this life arise from our lack of perfect confidence in God? And why is it that we have so little trust? See how full to-day's office is of lively and loving faith. In the epistle St. Paul exclaims: "Brethren: We are confident of this very thing, that He Who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ." The gradual says: "They that fear the Lord hope in Him: He is their Helper and their Protector." The collect prays that God, our refuge and strength, fountain of all goodness, will grant that what we ask in faith, we may effectually obtain. And the introit utters the psalmist's loyal cry: "If Thou, O Lord, wilt

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mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand it? For with Thee there is merciful forgiveness, O God of Israel."

What an amazing psalm the *De Profundis* is! Out of the very depths the soul asserts its hold on the God Whom it acknowledges it has offended. Lord! hear my voice. Over and over again the human heart cries to the Sacred Heart: "Thou knowest our frame. Thou rememberest we are but dust."

"This is Thy lamb, yea, Lamb of God!
This for whose sake Thy veins ran dry,
This for whose sake by a hill-road
Thou wentest forth to die.

"This is Thy lamb, though torn, defiled,
By the beast's teeth. When no stars gleam
All night, and never an angel smiled,
It went, in an ill dream.

"So is it torn and scarred so deep,
Thy lamb, Thy lamb, bruised and astray.
O, the true Shepherd knows His sheep,
Though hirelings turn away.

"See then, below the scarlet sin,
Shaming its heat, Thine own mark see,
Thy Name in Blood that hath sunk in,
Dripping from Calvary's tree."

Gather together from Sacred Scripture its most fearful warnings, most severe threats, most terrible examples of chastisement, most awe-inspiring pictures of final doom and eternal despair. Set them in orderly array and masterful magnificence; and add to them the full force of a gifted orator's elocution and eloquence. Sway the multitude as the thunder sways them, drive them down upon their knees in the very prostration of fear. Sinful man, tempted man, needs the curb of God's wrath, to restrain and subdue him; but God's deep works are done in other ways than these.

Evermore, among that multitude cowering before the whirlwind of the judgment, there will be those who can never cease to see, against a darker sky, on a far more awful day, the cross of Christ that proved His love for men. Evermore there will be souls that cry to Him: "I will never let Thee go, except Thou bless me. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Evermore there will be hearts possessed with the infinite passion of love, — hearts that have heard Christ cry, in His dying thirst: "Sate My Heart! Sate My Heart!" and who so love their neighbor as themselves, that their confident, exulting plea is this: "I will never let Thee go, except Thou bless these with me."

Christ's dying thirst for souls, such men know how to quench. Moses knew it in the desert. Paul knew it, binding up his life with his spiritual children's. Catherine of Siena felt it, praying: "Thou knowest right well, O dear Lord! that I have none other joy or comfort in this life but only to see the conversion of sinners unto Thee." "True indeed," she said to her followers, "I love you all entirely, and no less true is it that He also loves you far more tenderly than I can do, and thirsts for your salvation more than I or all men are able to conceive." The dear St. Elizabeth of Hungary knew it, praying for her enemies in a passion of saintly pardon: —

"Didst Thou not die for them, O Lord!
Upon the shameful tree?
Didst Thou not suffer for them, Lord!
As truly as for me?"

"Do I not love them for Thy sake?
O bless them, Jesu sweet!
By every hurt they work on me,
O win them to Thy feet!"

"And give them entrance to Thy heaven
With me, dear Lord! with me.
As for myself, Most Merciful!
I plead for them with Thee."

These — the saints. These — the men and women holily inebriated with the Blood of God. These — the perfect followers of the Crucified. But we? We stand and lift our hands in horror at our brother's guilt; we turn with loathing from our sister's fall; and then — our smooth life goes on as before. Where is our passion of intercession, our eager offering of penance, our intense cry for the sinner's salvation, a cry that will not be gainsaid, a penance that will not cease, till the life, bound up consciously and voluntarily with ours, is won from hell to heaven? Who loves his neighbor *as himself*, for love of Thee, O God! What Francis of Assisi now goes barefoot among us, divinely mad with the folly of the cross, begging these two things as choicest treasures: to know in body and in soul the sufferings of Christ, and to be filled with such a love as induced *Him* to endure such agony for men!

I hear the Son of Man proclaim judgment on sinful men, and the terrors of the tremendous day. Then I see Him stoop, He that shall be the Judge Himself hereafter, stoop among thorns that tear His hands and feet, and gather the lost sheep home. Looking on the Judge's face, I see the Good Shepherd's face, and beside His throne of judgment she stands who stood beside the tree of shame. "She never can forget what it cost her to become our Mother."

*Behold thy Mother! Then again,
Woman! behold thy son.
We lift our eyes, and lift our hearts.
O God, Thy will be done!
Mother! in tears we plead with thee
Hearken unto thine own.*

Thou never canst forget the pangs
Borne beneath Calvary's tree,
Thou never canst forget the souls
Borne in those pangs by thee.

We challenge now and evermore
Thy mother-love for men,
And to thy mother-heart commit
Our utmost need and pain.
In life and death we cry to thee :
Pray for all souls. Amen.

If this be the hope for the darkest sinner of our race, why should not those who in trembling love try to serve God, despite many falls, hope well? "Brethren! we are *confident* that He Who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ." After sore trouble, rest; after sharp conflict, peace; you shall come out more than conquerors through the Spirit's power.

THE SAINTS' BATTLE

THE VIGIL OF ALL SAINTS

THE great feasts of All Saints and All Souls, preceded by vigil and fast, bring their annual blessings to us, and make the month of November the most unearthly, unworldly month of all the year to those who dwell, during its too brief thirty days, with the radiant inhabitants of heaven and with purgatory's blessed dead.

It is a time for quiet thought, for many memories, for many hopes, and God alone knows for how many fervent prayers; a time when hearts "through all the faultful past go sorrowing," and, through all the lonely future, look forward to a day when the reapers shall come with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them, and when God, the loving Father, shall gather His dear children, reunited forever, into an eternal home.

Look upwards and behold them, they who stand there now already, a multitude whom no man can number, assembled triumphant before the great white throne. What

do those radiant faces tell you, as they gaze in ecstasy upon the face of Him Who bears continually the glorious scars that proclaim Him King of kings and Lord of lords forever? Over and over again, they say that these saints whose day we celebrate came, like their Leader, out of a sore conflict, and that they were possessed by a passionate love of the unseen.

“Salt of nations ! Twelve foundations !
 Twelve apostles — see them all !
 Trumps of thunder, and the wonder
 Of the Gentiles, holy Paul —
 Loving Peter, and still sweeter,
 Friend of Jesus, blessed John.
 Full of gladness — no more sadness
 Clouds the face Christ shines upon !

“High procession ! great confession !
 Hear the loud triumphal tones !
 Martyrs bleeding — Stephen leading
 With his crown of precious stones.
 Warriors glorious and victorious,
 Tried companions of the Lord,
 Fall before Him and adore Him.
 He, the Lamb, is their reward.”

It is the old lesson which Venerable Bede teaches, that lesson steeped in the life-blood of the King of Martyrs, and which deserves repeating every year, as these festivals return : —

“Dearly beloved brethren ! This day we keep with one great cry of joy, a feast in memory of all God’s holy children ; His children, whose presence is a gladness in heaven ; His children, whose prayers are a blessing to earth ; His children, whose victories are the crown of Holy Church ; His chosen, whose testifying is the more glorious in honor, as the agony in which it was given was the sterner in intensity. For, as the dreader grew the battle, so the grander grew the fighters ; and the triumph of martyrdom

waxed the more incisive by the multiplicity of suffering; and the heavier the torment, the heavier the prize."

What cowards we are, we lesser men who nevertheless have the saints' seven sacraments, the saints' Mother Church, the saints' hope set before us, yet who shiver and shrink at the sound of suffering, and run away from pain! I know not what stuff we are made of, in these mean, pleasure-loving days. Is it not better to suffer now than to suffer hereafter? Père de Ravignan says that God in His goodness mingles purgatory with every day of our lives, and so we should accept and clasp to our breasts the crosses He offers us. Fénelon declares that it is a blessing to have our purgatory in this world, but that we by our cowardice endure two instead of one. "Our resistance," he says, "makes earthly trials so ineffectual, that all has to be begun again after death. We should be in this life like souls in purgatory, supple and at peace in God's hand, yielding ourselves up to destruction in the avenging fire of love. *Happy those who suffer thus.*"

Happy? Yes, my God! Teach us this happiness, this deep delight of pain. Teach us two lessons, — to fight, and to suffer, for Thee and under Thy red-cross flag! Blessed who suffer — blessed who mourn — blessed who, wounded and bleeding, still face untiring the tireless foe! We are sinners; and we must, here or hereafter, do penance for our sins. We are called to be saints; and like the saints we must war unflinching in the tremendous warfare, if we would win the saints' reward and follow the mighty army into heaven.

"Cut, scourge, purge, burn here," prayed the penitent Augustine, "yea, burn here so as by fire, and spare there!" Yet not only for the cleansing and the penance do we fling ourselves, O God! into the red fire of earth's purgatory; but because pain purges out the dross, and brightens the

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gold, and brings us closer to Thee. Strike and spare not, O God ! and, even though we cry out otherwise, heed not, till every fibre of our being is one with Thee !

Sometimes, gazing steadily upward at the Blessed, radiant in their rapture which sin can mar no more, a light flashes over the soul for a moment, and dazzles it ; and it seems to comprehend, for that moment, that pain is heaven ! For what is heaven but union with God ; and does not he who clings closest to the Sacred Heart find union with God among the thorns, and does he not behold, in that darkness which makes earthly things invisible, the vision of Christ's face ?

Cowards that we are, to shrink from pain or from insult ; to fear this world's disgrace, or failure as worldly men count failure ; when the question is of God's will, God's honor, God's eternal cause ! We are soldiers in His army by the ineffaceable character of our Baptism. If we have been cowards, deserters, traitors, a hundred times, then the keener ought to be our soldierly longing to endure and encounter all, in order that we may retrieve our honor, and, far more, our Lord's honor ! But if He has kept us from open treason, who shall tell with what loyal love we ought to follow after Him, down into the very valley of the agony and up the heights of Calvary, upward, with all the saints, to heaven !

THE GARDEN OF GOD

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

ON All Saints' Day we walk in spirit in the far-off, radiant Paradise, the Garden of God. There are

“ The lily beds of virgins,
The roses' martyr-glow,
The cohorts of the fathers
Who kept the faith below ” ;

and there, in light that hath no ending,

“The pastures of the blessed
Are decked in glorious sheen.”

It does the soul inestimable good to dwell in those high and holy places, away, far, far away, from the dust and turmoil and toil of earth. Let us go there together ; and, from the midst of this unfading beauty, single out some of those saintly blossoms that we know and love, to form a special wreath to lay before the Sacred Heart to-day.

Agnes with her snow-white lamb, Dorothea with her roses, Agatha with her palm of supreme, immovable confidence, Cecilia with her harp, Catherine with her rack of torture, these and a myriad others are the virgin martyrs who won a two-fold crown. Around them throng many who won graces like to theirs by the martyrdom of love. Catherine of Bologna, Catherine of Siena, Rose of Lima, Teresa of Avila, Bridget of Ireland, Lidwina of Holland, Winifred of Wales, Gertrude of Saxony, Joan of France, Clare of Italy, — their very names in the naming make glad the Garden of God. The saintly matrons and widows, Paula of Rome, Margaret of Scotland, Elizabeth of Hungary and Elizabeth of Portugal, Catherine of Genoa, Jane Frances of France, Blessed Mary of the Incarnation, these and many others gather around the favored Anastasia, who is commemorated in the Mass of Christmas, and around St. Elizabeth, mother of the Baptist, and around the great St. Anne.

All classes of men are among the valiant soldiery of martyrdom — from great Popes and bishops, to little boys and fervent young acolytes. Peter and Linus and Cletus and the little Cyril — these are of ancient days. But the long line goes in thought down the ages to Geronimo of Algiers, and Josaphat of Russia, Darboy of Paris, Brebœuf and Lallemand of Canada, and may we not add Damien

of Molokai, and the last young priest who gave up his life among the yellow-fever patients of the South and in the smallpox hospitals of the North?

Then the confessors of the faith, — old men like Vincent de Paul, the apostle of charity; Philip Neri, with his skin like an ermine, and his wondrous, throbbing, breaking heart of love; Alphonsus Liguori, with a similar passionate devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the immortal souls redeemed by Christ; Nicholas de Flüe, soldier, magistrate, husband, father, hermit, living at last on the Body of Christ alone! The men of middle age, — Francis of Assisi, his Lord's own scars on hands and feet and side; Anthony of Padua, holding the Infant Jesus in his arms; the Curé of Ars, spending himself utterly for his brothers, — all winning myriads of flowers for heaven's garden, from the wild and weed-grown fields of earth! The young men, Stanislaus, Aloysius, John Berchmans, of whom we might almost venture to say that even here they were pure as the snow, bright as the light, beautiful in God's eyes as His angels are! What are they all but types and followers of the Boy Jesus, the Young Man Jesus, the great Miracle-Worker, the great Preacher, the Great High Priest, Jesus, the Good Shepherd giving His life for His sheep?

What of the men and women who, having instructed many unto righteousness, now shine as the stars forever and ever, — St. Ignatius, Monsieur Olier, St. De La Salle, the Venerable Mother Barat and her holy contemporary, the Venerable Mother Julia, great founders of great orders! With them Louise de Marillac, Catherine McAuley, Émélie De Rodat, Madame De Pollalion, Eugénie Smet, Jeanne Picot and her helpmates. Think of Benedict, Dominic, Camillus; of the Doctors and great Fathers, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Athanasius, Bernard, Thomas of Aquin, Francis de Sales; of the wise Popes, the saintly Popes,

the martyr Popes, from Peter to Gregory, and from Gregory to Pius V., and from Pius V. to Leo XIII., illustrious and venerable name ! And the souls of lay people uncanonized by ecclesiastical decree, but holy and precious forever in the annals of the Church — the Baron de Renty, peer of France ; Marie Rousseau, the inn-keeper's wife ; Armelle Nicolas, the serving maid of Campen  ac ; the holy mother of Dom Bosco ; the saintly Alexandrine de la Ferronnays and Natalie Narischkin, flowers from Russia's frosty coast ; Eug  nie de Gu  rin ; our own General Garesch ; and the great South American ruler, with the soul of a crusader, crying out in death, beneath the knife of the assassin, " God never dies ! "

How they crowd to the recollection ; yet how many, very many more are counted in God's memory, whom we know not ! All through the isles of Oceanica, and down the fever-stricken coasts of Africa, and amid its dread desert wastes, and through China and Japan and the torrid zone of India, and everywhere in Europe, and all through North and South America, are the graves of those who nobly gave all they had to God, for the souls He loved. Franciscans and Dominicans and Jesuits and seculars, and priests and nuns of the many orders that make the Church of God a type and forthshadowing of His paradise above, they lie now still in death, who were in life too often pursued by the scorn and calumny of the very men for whom they lived and died, and for whom their one prayer in dying was that they all might meet in perfect peace at last, all misunderstanding banished, in the eternal Garden of God.

For us, who to-day have gathered a few fair names together, out of the great number whom no man can number, written in the Lamb's Book of Life on high, it remains for us to remember that these have left to us an example that we should follow their steps. Shame on us if

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we prove cowards or laggards in the race that they so nobly ran before us, and in the cause for which they gladly died ! As we bring this imperfect garland to-day to the Heart of Jesus, it ought to be our earnest petition that He will breathe on us with the vivifying breath of His Holy Spirit, till our own lives shall blossom into an immortal beauty, which shall one day adorn with a like glorious perfection the fadeless Garden of God.

THE JOY OF PURGATORY

ALL SOULS' DAY

THE Church keeps marvellous festival at this season. Round the world glad strains are ringing, and the three realms of God's great kingdom meet. The Church Militant hails the Church Triumphant, and the anthems of heaven are blending in wonderful accord with chants of earth. Before the day is done, like the minor chords in some majestic harmony, the *Dies Iræ* mingles with the *Alleluias* ; and the Vespers on All Saints' Day bring us to All Souls' Day and to the Church of the blessed dead.

In our meditations we have found one secret of the saints' holiness to lie in their spiritual intensity, in their overwhelming realization of spiritual things. A similar lesson is taught us by the suffering souls.

Have we put it clearly before our minds that there is actually, and at this moment, a state or condition of souls called Purgatory, just as real as that in which we are living now, a state into which all of us who hope to be saved may expect one day to enter, a condition in which some once known to us on earth are truly living now?

Let us go thither now in thought, led, as some time we really shall be, by the beautiful angel of death. For there

must come a time — God knows the hour and the moment, but not one of us knows — when our life here will stop completely, and we shall find that death is indeed a different thing from life.

Body and soul will then be parted. O marvellous parting! Sunder friend from friend, parent from child, wife from husband, — these are only faint figures of the state in which the astonished soul finds itself, when its lifelong companion, the body, enfolds it no longer. That part of man which once moved, spoke, saw, now lies motionless; while the spirit, which none could see or hear or feel, goes forth, — to meet and to see God.

Here on earth it had its cravings for human sympathy and affection, for human praise and success. All that has faded away now into nothingness. One thing alone it craves, — God's love, God's praise, and to see God's face. Borne by angels, swifter than lightning it goes, — to what place matters little, for its desire is granted, and God is seen. Can we comprehend what happens then? For the first time the soul knows itself truly, — what it really is, its meanness, its unworthiness; and it knows what God is, how beautiful, how perfect, how worthy of love!

Willingly, then, it goes to its Purgatory.¹ There it remains a longer or shorter time, as God may decree; but our prayers can avail with Him to soften its pain and shorten its stay.

St. Thomas and Suarez teach that we know nothing for certain as to the place of the abode of the holy souls. It is a very pious belief that, in some cases, for reasons known by God, they may go here and there in the world, and may be near us; and souls specially devoted in life to the Blessed Sacrament are sometimes, it is said, permitted to visit the altars after death, in their deathless love of Jesus present

¹ See Cardinal Newman's "Dream of Gerontius."

there. But, for the holy souls in general, there is supposed to be a regular abode. Wherever it may be, it is an old opinion that it is a *place below*, vast as an abyss, deep as a gulf, bare as a desert, — a place of punishment, of deserved pain, and of purgation. Do we shrink from it? God help us to take this truth to heart, that the souls who have to endure it do not shrink from it! God teach us to realize here on earth the joy of Purgatory, its patient peace, its perfect love!

In Purgatory there will be a twofold pain, says St. Thomas. The one is the pain of sense, caused by fire, that marvellous element, intangible, strong, and beautiful exceedingly; and the other, a far greater suffering, the unspeakable pain caused by the loss of God's face, once seen. St. Catherine of Genoa, who ranks among doctors of theology in regard to the doctrine on Purgatory, says of that pain, "that not only no language can describe it, but that, without a special light from God, we have no understanding capable of forming any conception of it"; yet she calls it "*the fire of love.*"

However great the pain, believe it well that there they know nothing of the feeling which here makes people shrink from the mention of that foretold future pain! One idea possesses them: the longing to be cleansed by any means whatever, in order to behold their God in His loveliness once more. "The whole state, the whole life, the whole occupation of these souls, is to hunger after God; they do nothing, they can do nothing, else. Whatever they do, in brief, they suffer." So writes Bishop Gay, to whose strong treatise on the subject much of this article is due.

Nevertheless, their joy is such as earth can never know. Blend all delights here, spiritual as well as natural, together; we can never match the joy of the suffering souls. When one dwells in thought upon it, one almost longs for the

cleansing fires that bring with them so great a gain. For, in that kingdom of the dead, men sin no more. Is there any pain or sorrow to equal the possibility of sin? But there, none will ever offend God again, by even the slightest semblance of a fault or an imperfection. They know that they have seen God, and that certainly once more they shall see His face, and that then the Vision will last forever. They know that forever they are safe and may soon be free.

Let us think of that fire as a cleansing bath into which they plunge with a rapture of glad consent a thousand times more intense than is their pain. "Oh, how nobly they suffer, and how free they are from self!" says the Bishop, already quoted. "They have an indescribable joy in seeing that God is a light so holy, that the slightest shadow hinders the creature from being consummated in Him. This conviction rejoices them much more than their punishment afflicts them. No consideration could make them wish that their punishment were less intense, or less prolonged than it ought to be. If they ask to be delivered, and sometimes with so much earnestness, it is much more from love of God than from a wish to escape their sufferings." "They seek not what things are their own, but the honor of God," says Cardinal Bellarmine; "for they desire to be freed, in order that they may praise God more and more."

Let us pray for them during this month of the holy souls; let us gain indulgences for them; let us offer Communions for them, and have Masses said. The glory of God is interested in their relief and in their speedy release. Into the pain of Purgatory our prayers drop like the soft summer rains on the parched and thirsty soil.

Let us also ask for a special grace on their part,—that they will pray for us to possess, even here, some portion of their joy and their nobility of soul, in order that we on earth may here welcome pain as we shall welcome it in Pur-

gatory. For pain, borne willingly and gladly here, will help us to escape those future sufferings. Let us beg God, above all, for that grace which is the source of that unutterable joy in Purgatory, — an absolute devotion to His holy will and to His supreme intelligence.

SPIRITUALITY

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost is near the beautiful feasts of All Saints and All Souls. These are feasts of many memories; the thought of the dead is predominant; we dwell for the time with our dear ones numbered with the saints in heaven's happiness, or who are waiting in unearthly patience with the suffering souls till their purgation is complete.

Yet a very practical thought for the living is closely linked with these two days. Let us turn our earnest attention towards it for a while. As the golden light of the Indian Summer shines around us, and the yellow leaves slip silently to their mother earth, and nature speaks of death, and yet promises resurrection, let us ask ourselves in these autumn silences: *What makes a saint? Can you or I be one?*

St. Paul tells us, with terse words, in this Sunday's epistle, some characteristic marks of those who are not saints; and one noticeable mark is this, that they mind earthly things. On the other hand, our conversation, the Christian's conversation, he says, is in heaven. And he goes on to speak of certain of his fellow-laborers, whose names, he says, are in the book of life.

In the book of life. Mark what great thing this is. Did his heaven-rapt vision indeed look onward, and see before

God's throne a great book open, and read there the names of Evodia and Syntyche and Clement, and "the rest of my fellow-laborers," that blessed band? Did his gaze read onward down the ages, and see other names there, as that of Augustine who was to owe to him his great conversion, or the Pope who was to choose him as patron of the "Servants of the Paraclete," or the Cardinal who was to enlist them, and who is now gone to the blest community beyond the veil? Did he read your name there, or mine? Does God's all-searching eye find them there? Who shall say?

This is not the only account of records kept in heaven. Listen to St. John's solemn reckoning, in the epistle for All Saints' Day, when there were an hundred and forty-four thousand signed; and after this he beheld a great multitude whom no man could number, but all standing before the throne, clearly in sight of the Lamb slain for them, each one known by number and name to God. In that vast multitude, from all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, had we our place among the saints? As the dread thought fixes itself upon our mind, we ask more urgently: What is it makes a saint? Is it great austerities, missionary labors, raptures, ecstasies, miracles? No, our merciful God did not mean such things as these, when He called us — and He does call us — to be saints.

In one sense we must all mind earthly things; we must all eat and drink and sleep, and live an ordinary human life. The trouble with us is that we make human things, earthly things, come first; while the saints' conversation is in heaven.

In the visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich, the little nun beheld, entranced, the great Elias in his mysterious hiding-place; and she asked him in her quaint simplicity if he was not tired, waiting so long; to whom the prophet answered magnificently: "In God there is no time."

This one great thought of God — this one habit — making Him first, thinking of Him first, loving Him first and most, this constant practice of the presence of God, is a sure means to become spiritual; and a spiritual man is on the high road to sanctity.

He is not a visionary, a merely imaginative man, mind you. He may be a merchant, a soldier, a student, yet be spiritual and become a saint. To show to what plain, every-day matters it comes down, Father Faber, who has said, "Is there anything in the world one-half so sweet as to think of God?" has also said, "I cannot conceive of a man being spiritual who does not habitually say the rosary."

Nowadays a great stress is laid on active works; yet in active works, too eagerly undertaken and too busily transacted, we may lose interior peace. Mother Margaret Hallahan said of her novices of early days that they *must be trained to spirituality*. "As it is, they are set to work directly, and have not time to be trained; always giving out, and taking nothing in, which in time would be the destruction of all spirituality. If you make them truly spiritual, they will become instruments in God's hand to work for His glory."

If this was said of souls in a convent, what need have we in the world to give ourselves breathing-spaces of time for the "one great thought of God!" Let us try one very practical method of gaining it; and that is, at least ten minutes' thoughtful reading of some spiritual work each day. The plan seems simple, like Father Faber's words about the rosary; but try it. Reading may develop into aspirations of prayer; aspirations into meditation; meditation into contemplation; and contemplation into that peaceful union of the soul with God which nothing can disturb, when our will is one with His will, and heaven — the saints' heaven

— is ours on earth. The steady practice of these methods may at first be hard, but let us persevere ; the vigil and fast precede the feast. Our good God will crown His own work at last, and will number His faithful children among the saints.

ONCE ONLY

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — THE SUNDAY
NEXT BEFORE ADVENT

IT is the last Sunday after Pentecost, the final Sunday of the ecclesiastical year, upon which is always read the awful gospel describing that day of days, the final day of all years that shall ever be, the day on which Time shall die. As lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even unto the west, so shall be that coming of the Son of Man, when the heavens shall be moved, and all tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty. He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice ; and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them.

Thus the solemn description falls, annually, upon our ears, ending always with the emphatic affirmation : “ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”

Somewhat more than one hundred years ago, in a land across the sea, an era dawned, so horrible that one might scarcely be blamed for wishing the end of the world had come. We call the country France, and the era that of the Revolution. Will the Day of Judgment be like that, or like the Cawnpore massacre, or like the horrors of the slave trade? The Judgment will be very different from all of

these. While it must bear some special points of resemblance to them, because our Lord Himself likened it to the fall of Jerusalem, making that indeed its peculiar type, it will have other and very opposite features upon which it may not be without use to dwell awhile, this Sunday.

It will be marked with a certain order and wonderful precision. He Who will then send forth His messengers is the Lord of law and order ; and no army ever moved with the marshalled magnificence and perfectly planned intention with which those serried ranks of angel warriors shall sweep onward and downward, along the starlit highways of the skies that are soon to fall forever, down to the earth and sea that are about to pass forevermore away.

These winged warriors of the God of Hosts have a measured rank and file. There go the lovely Angels and the grand Archangels, with the masterful Dominations following close upon them, and the fearless Virtues, and the resistless Powers, and the Thrones whose tranquillity no possible horror can disturb from their special tranquil peace, the guerdon of their appointed post beneath the feet of God ; and there are the regal Principalities, and the Cherubim with their unmatched intelligence, and the Seraphim with their unmatched love caught from the Holy Spirit's fires.

Who shall count them as they sweep onward, onward, onward, till not one angel is left in heaven on this final day of earth ? Who shall paint them, or describe them, for mortal man to see in vision, we that shall surely see them ere Time shall die ? Like flame their eyes, those awful eyes before which we would hide our own in terror ; faultless their faces, set like flint to do the will of God alone. They are strong with immortal vigor ; on every shield is a cross in red, like no other red but that of the Precious Blood. Michael the Commander goes before them as their leader, he who flung Lucifer over heaven's battlements when the ages had their

dawning ; he who is to chain him down forever, when the ages are forever done. These are the armies of heaven that ride upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Behind the angelic army, who are these ? what are these ? Spiritual presences of most ethereal loveliness, brighter than the sunbeam, purer than the snow, noiseless, unfearing, expectant, press with holy desire to a long looked for meeting ; the souls of the redeemed, for ages safe in heaven, go down to meet their bodies uprisen from the tomb. Those twelve times twelve thousand from the tribes of the sons of Jacob, — those multitudes unnumbered from the nations everywhere, — those come out of great tribulations to the joy that knows no ending, — pass on to an ecstatic joy unfelt as yet, of the union, never again to be broken, with the bodies that once were the temples of the Holy Ghost. We have no words, here, subtile or delicate enough to describe that rapturous meeting, when soul and body wed again ; it is a future delight to be thought upon in the stillness of meditation, without any “ noise of words.”

In that immense multitude gathered before the throne of judgment in the Valley of Jehosaphat, composed of the entire human race, none absent, none by any possibility forgotten, — you and I must be. In that tremendous day, will come for each one of us one supremely tremendous moment, when you — and you — and I — must stand, full in view of all that throng, its centre, and alone. The actors in that transcendently unique drama, only once to be enacted, shall rise, tier upon tier, in the gigantic amphitheatre ; and all eyes, good or evil, of angel or devil, saint or sinner, saved or lost, shall be fastened, for one most awful moment, only upon you or me. Then, whether we will or not, all the secrets of each heart shall lie bare before the universe ; earth's mysteries will be solved, all riddles read,

God's justice vindicated, man's real merits or demerits known. The veil of deceit will be torn from all eyes, once and forever ; and each of us will pass, with perfect precision and most perfect order, to his endless and most just doom.

Each in his turn must stand there, Mary immaculate and Mary the sinner, John and Judas, David and Cain, and you and I. O Thou true Man, Jesus Christ, Who sittest upon that throne of judgment, our God and yet our Brother ! look then with Thy human eyes upon us, Thou Who knowest our frame, and rememberest we are but dust !

HEAVEN

IN the season between All Saints' Day and Advent, when our thoughts are carried perforce to heaven, let us dwell there in spirit for a while ; and let us strive to picture, dimly though it needs must be, the endless joys of heaven.

We will go to-day, — God in His infinite mercy grant it actually to us all at last ! — away from pain, and sin, and fear of eternal loss, up through the gates of bliss. We that are worn and weary will enter in, where sorrow and care forever cease.

Earth has dropped into nothingness ; for us time and night are over ; forevermore the sun and stars have ceased to shine ; none need their light in that luminous city, which the glory of God makes radiant, and the Lamb is the light thereof. If it be that we died yesterday, and, far below, where earth was, there is weeping, and hearts we loved and leaned on once are breaking, we cannot heed them now. For before us One goes, lovelier than an angel, and His feet are nail-pierced, and His brows thorn-wounded, and

His Heart is tenderer than any lover's there below. Turning, one Ascension Day, He smiled upon earth, and left it ; and after that, men grew homesick for Him and heaven. There has been no rest since, till a voice whispered : " Arise and follow Him " ; and having found Him now, Whom our soul loveth, we hold Him, and we will not let Him go.

This is heaven, then, these radiant spirits tell us, thronging round our ransomed souls in rapture, welcoming us to their abode of infinite delight. Blessed angels ! tell us what *is* heaven ? Let us gather their answers, as they come in almost inconceivable beauty of expression, far beyond poetic power to reach.

O streets of fine, fair gold, like the sun in his strength shining, yet dazzling none who see your matchless coloring, and walk with happy feet over your floors that chime in heavenly cadences under the passers' tread ! O sea of glass like crystal, never storm-disturbed or wreck-marred, before the great white throne ! O walls of jasper and gates of pearl, where the light gleams like the opal, and rainbow-tints are undimmed by rain or wind ! O clear, cool river of life, flower-bordered, with mystic trees o'ershadowed, whose fruit is for the healing of the many, many nations gathered in ! O gardens where the lily of the virgin and the martyr's palm and the wise doctor's laurel grow fair and sweet and tall ! I see you all before me, each in your separate loveliness, and together in your wonderful united charm.

Rank above rank, high as the eagle flieth, whose tireless wing bears him upward to the centre of the sun, choir above choir rise the Angels with songs of ravishing melody, the imperial Archangels, the strong Thrones and mighty Dominations, the Virtues like clear-cut diamonds, the Principalities before whose look earth's proudest prince would

veil his face in terror, the Powers that could smite down earth's united armies, the Cherubim with their marvellous intelligence, the Seraphim ablaze with love. Higher yet, St. Michael bears the standard of the God of armies, and the twelve Apostles stand in glorious state about Him, and a throne is set for the King's Mother at His right hand forevermore.

Listen ! around and throughout this city rises a matchless melody, the song always new to them that hear it, forever growing more harmonious and clear. The light throbs to the music, and the music is all aglow with light ; and the harmony never shall know discord, nor the radiance grow dim. Gigantic chords ring like choral thunder ; choir answers choir as though ocean answered ocean, a million waves beating in unison upon adamantine walls. Upward the angelic, ever-youthful, ever-tireless voices fling the anthem, jubilant beyond expression, yet full of reverent awe. " Alleluia ! Alleluia ! for the Lord our God the omnipotent reigneth. And He shall reign — and He shall reign — forever, and forever, and forever, and forevermore ! "

Weary of that music ? They do not know what weariness means in heaven. Weary of God ? Deeper and deeper they plunge into His Essence, and intenser grows the rapture, and no nearer is the end. Strong with a strength that eternity may add to, but never weaken ; glad with a joy that ever increases, and cannot pall ; wise, calm, and peaceful ; one with the will of God ; incapable of wishing or missing aught He wishes not or misses not ; — and is this heaven ?

Once again, look ! Our dear ones are gathered together, where there can be no more separation, nor death, nor misunderstanding, but all who loved Jesus truly are safe with Jesus, through His infinite mercy, forevermore. There the mother meets the child, whose first thoughts she directed

to Him ; there friend meets friend, in an eternity of happy union that began even here on earth. There the loves of earth are transformed and transfigured in the endless joys on high.

Behold, in this city above, this "new Jerusalem, vision of peace to prophet's dream," on the east are three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, on the west three gates ; and there the nations of the earth bring their glory and honor in. Onward they come, following the steps of Him Who cleft a passage for them through the red sea of His Passion on Good Friday, and through the clouds on His Ascension Day. Outside, they leave all that can cause a moment's trouble ; within, there is no more sorrow nor crying, neither can there be any more pain. Forever strong, forever young, forever well, — dear angels ! dear saints ! ah, dearest Mother ! and is this heaven ?

Once again, look ! Enthroned upon the highest throne of that immortal city, King of kings and Lord of lords, we see Him. All we ransomed sons of Adam, pure now as unfallen angels, undazzled we look on the unveiled Face of God. We were mad once for beauty, we were hungry once for love, we fainted and failed through weakness. But we look now, and we shall never cease to look, on Him Who is Beauty, and Strength, and truest Love, that can never deceive, nor fail, nor pass away. And this, O soul of mine, is heaven. That radiant Vision uplifts us, beyond mother's or lover's love ; enfolds us ; fills us and calms us with answering love forever, — the love of Him Who is Love itself, the Holy Spirit of God.



